

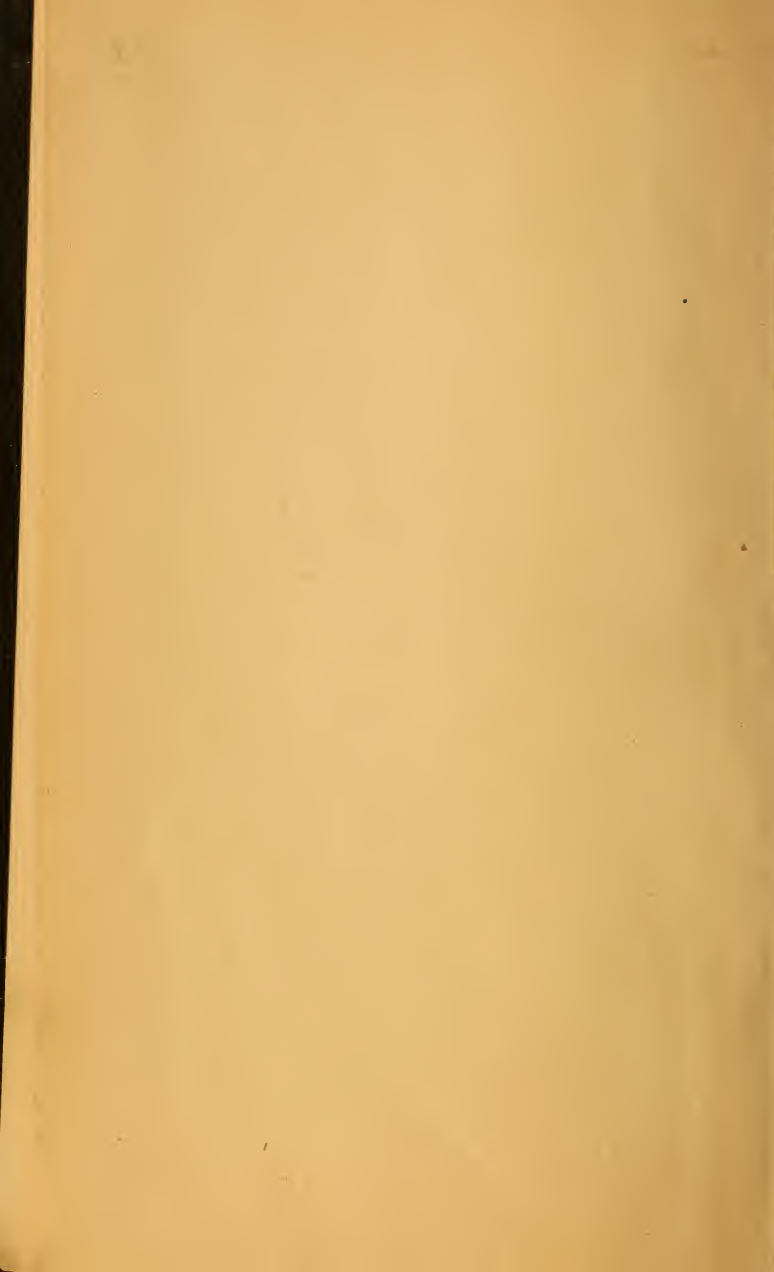


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1495-

HEBREW DRAMAS:

FOUNDED

ON INCIDENTS OF BIBLE-HISTORY.

BY

WILLIAM TENNANT,

"

PROFESSOR OF ORIENTAL LANGUAGES IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREW'S.



JOHN MENZIES, EDINBURGH;
D. BOGUE, LONDON.

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PR 5549
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• EDINBURGH : MACPHERSON & SYME, PRINTERS,
31 EAST ROSE LANE.

A.M. 17 Apr. 79.

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JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER,

OR

THE HEBREW HEROINE:

A DRAMATIC POEM.

THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF

CHARLES THE FIRST

BY

JOHN BURNET

OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

IN TWO VOLUMES

LONDON

Printed by

J. B. R. & C.

1710

By the Author

at the

Printers

of the

University

of

Oxford

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

JEPHTHAH, Son of Gilhad, Prince of Gilead.

* SHOLMI, his friend.

HANAN, a Gileadite Warrior.

ZELEK, an Ammonite.

* TIRZAH, Wife of Jephthah.

* ZEBAH, Daughter of Jephthah.

PRIEST of Mizpeh.

HEBREW Herald.

HEBREW Prophet.

NURSE of Zebah.

CHOIR of Gileadite damsels, companions of Zebah.

MESSENGERS.

SENE lies in Mizpeh, in the Land of Gilead, beyond the Jordan, and in its neighbourhood of mountains and valleys ;—partially in Rabbath-Ammon, capital of the Ammonites, eastward from Mizpeh, towards the Arabian desert.

* These three names marked * are arbitrary. They are Hebrew words having significations suitable to the personages,—Sholmi, *Man of my Peace*,—Tirzah, *Pleasantness*,—Zebah, *Sacrifice*.

JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER.

ACT I. SCENE I.

Exterior of Jephthah's house in Mizpeh.

SHOLMI, JEPHTHAH, HANAN.

SHOLMI. Hail, son of Gilhad !

HANAN. Welcome to the land

O Jephthah ! of thy fathers !

JEPHTHAH. Peace be to you,
My honour'd countrymen ; for, by that name,
Ye men of Mizpeh ! I rejoice again,
After a long disunion, to address you.

SHOLMI. Thy country now, with reparation large
And just, amends thy kinsfolks injuries,
The wrongs inflicted by thy father's house
Upon thy unreprouched youth.

JEPHTHAH. These wrongs—

O be they all forgotten, and nought now
Remember'd, but past kindnesses and loves,—
Sweet childhood's words, and sports, and tender
thoughts,

Of mother, father, sisters, brothers, friends,
Grav'd deep upon the tablet of the heart,
And now, in me, to sense more exquisite,
Recall'd, at sight of these, my former haunts,
Where I was wont to play, a boy,—the court
Whereon I practis'd my yet-tottering steps,—
The olive overshadowing it, whose tops
I clomb up in my hardihood,—the vines
Girdling my father's casements with their long
And luscious arms, on which the pruning-knife
I learn'd, yet fearfully, to exercise ;—
All these remembrances, which, in my walks
O'er Ishtob's land, solac'd my solitude,
Now freshen in my heart, and influence
Mine eyes even to the tears ;—Alas ! why should
These pure and tender impulses of soul
Give place to harsher thoughts of unlike strain ?
'Tis not for this—t' embrace my father's hearth—
My father's people call me back to Mizpeh ;—
War, horrid war !—The Ammonite is up,
And near ;—My country needs my strength of arm,

My war-encountering heart—The spear and shield
For battle must be grasp'd.

SHOLMI. My lord ! the foes,
(As thou in part hast been appris'd already),
Those children of Ben-Ammi, who, of old,
Hir'd Beor's Son to curse us, have pour'd forth
From Rabbath-Ammon, their hill-citadel,
Their troops by thousands westward o'er our land ;—
From Jazer to the Tower of Penuel,
From Ashdoth-pisgah north to Havoth-jair,
No sheepfold, fig-tree-field, corn-cover'd vale,
Hath scap'd their devastation, as in bands
Scouring they pass, and sweeping from their place
The shepherd with his flocks, the husbandman
Together with his harvest, vintage-men
With their year's vintage ;—Mahanaim's pride
Is trodden down by spoilers,—Rogelim
Hath lost her people ;—Minnith's wheat-rich plain
Is scorched into blackness ;—Jabbok's stream,
From Ramoth-Gilead to the Jordan's banks,
Flows through a land of desolation,
Of weeping mothers with their sons and daughters
Clinging in terror round them ;—Bashan's plains,
Gilead's green mountains, have their cry sent up,
Demanding thee from Ishtob's sheep-brows'd land,

Numbering twelve thousand warriors, who obey
Abiel their tardy prince, have pitched their tents
'Tween Medeba and Heshbon, where they skulk,
Awaiting till the roaming Ammonite
Come down to burn with fire their villages.
The sons of Gad, that, in their number, reach
To twice ten thousand, spread their broken bands
From Debir's border to Beth-ammon's vale,
Amid whose bushy hollows camp'd they lie,
Astonish'd at the foe's rapacity,
And by his onset quail'd,—their chieftains slain,
Their pride of heart confounded :—over them
Gareb, the son of Hashem, rules, a prince
Fearful, and yet untaught the rule of men.
Manasseh's tribe, the Geshurites, and sons
Of Bashan, and Mount Gilead, those who dwell
In fenced cities, villages, and folds,
From Shenir and the Jordan's founts, to where
The Jabbok westward rolls his winding wave,
Lie here encamp'd, our Gilead's sole defence,
In Mizpeh ;—See the white pavilions pitch'd
Of these our shepherd-warriors, on the slope,
In rows down stretching from the city-wall
Unto the Jabbok's olive-fringed lip.
These in their various companies and troops,

Do greet, O Prince, thy coming ; and await
Their time and their appointments from thy word ;—
We under thee, each in our place, subserve.

JEPHTHAH. O friends ! let us forestall the prowling foe,
And, ere he wist, transfer the wasting war
To his own realm, where now he scornful sits
Upon his hill of Rabbah, eating up
The spoil of Israel. For achieving this
More perfectly, let messengers be sent
To Gareb, Hashem's son, and Abiel,
With notice of our purpose, and request
That, with the troops of Reuben and of Gad,
They meet us speedily upon the plain
Abel-cerāmim ; thence, conjoin'd to march
Against the mountain people, that rejoice
In their despite against the land of Israel.

SHOLMI. My lord, these orders shall be straight
perform'd ;
I to the Gadite will dispatch a post,
To call them upward from Beth-aram's vale.

HANAN. And I shall by intelligence excite
The tardy Reubenite, t' unpitch, and leave
His bootless ambuscade near Heshbon's wall.

JEPHTHAH. Then go, my lords, and prosper.

SCENE II.

Chamber of Jephthah's house.

Enter JEPHTHAH (armed, who doffs his helmet on entrance), ZEBAH, TIRZAH.

ZEBAH. So soon, dear father! to depart from us
For the war-field?

TIRZAH. And ere thou hast had time
To breathe from heat of journey, or to make
Thy courts in Mizpeh, and thy household-chamber
Familiar to thy soul?

JEPHTHAH. My spoused wife!
My daughter! dearest to mine eyes!—O now
Father and spouse must be a while put off,
And, in their stead, the warrior be put on!
My country calls me; 'tis to fight for Israel,
Her grey-hair'd men, her widows, mothers, daughters,
Her babes and fatherless, that I forsake
My best-belov'd, for the tumultuous field
Where battle rages;—'Tis that peace again
May bless our Jacob; that the virgin's song,
The shepherd's pipe, the bridegroom's evening harp,

Each utterance of a land's felicity,
May yet be heard, in mingled consonance,
On Gilead's mountains and on Bashan's plains ;
O, 'tis for this that I abandon thee ;
My wife ! and thee my daughter !—God again,
The God of battles, in his gracious love,
Will bring me back !

TIRZAH. May Israel's saviour
Cast down the host of strangers with the sword
Of those that love him, and that guard the widow
And virgin from their ruthless ravagings !

ZEBAH. And may my father to his home return,
Clad in the rich spoils of his enemies,
And shouting gratulations of sweet joy !
For me, till his return, my task shall be
To braid, and broider, and set up with gold
A chaplet, which may ready be to deck
His warrior-brow, as to our gates again
He comes rejoicing in his triumph back.

HERALD (*who enters*).

O Prince of Israel's armies ! Put thou now
Thy helmet on ; take up thy spear and shield ;
And, as a giant, gird thee for the war ;
The hosts stand congregate on Mizpeh's plain,
Awaiting thee to head them :—All the sons

JEPHTHAH. Israel calls,
Nor brooks my longer tarriance.—Now farewell,
My wife ! My sweetest child ! Farewell ! May God
Make us all meet again in happiness ! (*Kisses them*).

ZEBAH. God go with thee,
O, father, and triumphant bring thee back !

SCENE III.

HEBREW PROPHET (*addressing them*),
March on, thou son of Gilhad ! Thou that, long

An exile from thy father's house, art now
Return'd, a shield of help to Israel,
March onward in thy mightiness ! Draw near
To battle ; order thou the legions forth ;
Furbish the spear ; put on the brigandine ;
Make red the shields of all thy valiant men !
For lo ! the day of vengeance comes, the day
When Israel shall avenge him of his wrongs,
And satiate and make drunk his sword with blood
Of those that render'd desolate his land !
Howl, city on the hill ! For thou art taken !
City of waters ! Howl, for thou art spoil'd !
Daughters of Rabbah ! cry ; gird ye with sackcloth ;
Lament ; run by the hedges to and fro,
With shrieks of lamentation, for all joy
Is perish'd from your streets, the voice of mirth,
The voice of bridegroom, and the voice of bride !
'Tis come—the day of bloody recompence ;
Of dreadful tribulation to the troublers !—
O thou backsliding daughter ! that hath clapp'd
Thy hands, and stamp'd with thine insulting feet
So long at Israel, wherefore gloriest thou
In the strong fortress of thy mountain-walls,
And in the valleys, the long flowing valley,
Spread at thy feet, rich overclad with vines ?

Behold upon thee there is brought a fear ;—
As thou hast drunk the milk, and ate the fruits,
Of Gilead, and of Bashan, so thy grapes
Shall be consum'd, thy flocks and herds shall be
Scatter'd, and rapt away with violence ;
The hosts of God surround thee ; thou art fallen !
So perish in their wickedness the wicked !
So perish all thine enemies, O Israel !—
March onward, then, thou Chief of Princes !—yet,
O Son of Gilhad ! take thou heed—beware—
Lest the unweigh'd pronouncing of thy lips
Entangle and perplex thy soul with snare !
'Tis done—thine unadvised lip hath spoken !—
A mighty stone of trial waits the mighty !

SCENE IV.

A Situation before the Armies.

SHOLMI, ZELEK.

SHOLMI. Here let us stand, my lord ! here hold
our parle,
Ere th' adverse armies join the battle-shock ;—

My prince, the head of Israel's hosts, hath sent
Me as his mouth and his ambassador,
To ask thy lord and master, Ammon's king,
Why, as a prowler, he, by night and day,
Comes down to devastate our beauteous land,
Ev'n as an evening wolf to raven there,
To swallow up her substance, and to make
Gilead and Bashan, and the shores of Arnon,
A den of weeping, and a wilderness?

ZELEK. I have an answer ready for my king;—
The king of Ammon, an invader comes
To fight against thee, and to plunder thee,
Thee in thy land—because that land is his;
Because, when Israel out of Egypt came,
Your roaming people spoil'd him of his soil,
From Arnon north to Jabbok, from the stream
Of Jordan to the eastern wilderness;—
Of all this land the Ammonite was robb'd;—
Therefore restore again, O Prince, in peace
What thou unjustly has possess'd thee of;
And go—with thy proud brother, Ephraim,
Bide thee beyond the Jordan.

SHOLMI. Israel,
When from the house of Egypt up he came,
Took not the land of Moab, nor the land

Of Ammon's children ; but possess'd himself,
By right of conquest, of King Sihon's land ;
Because the Ammonite, contemning terms
Of peace, assail'd him, unprovok'd, with war
Upon the field of Jahaz ;—Israel's God
Did there deliver Sihon and his people
Into the hand of Israel ; there our fathers
Smote them in battle ; and, by right of war,
Possess'd the land of those they overthrew,
Now impotent to people and possess it.
This is their right of occupancy ; this
Their holding and their claim, confirm'd and back'd
By a long tenure of three hundred years :—
Let Ammon keep his own, that which his god
Milcom hath given him ; that which Jacob's God
Hath given us, we will fearlessly retain ;—
Boasts Ammon's king to be of more account
Than Balak, king of Moab ? Yet did he
E'er strive with Israel, or dispute our right
To cultivate, as ours, King Sihon's land ?
Who, for three hundred years, hath e'er up-stirr'd
That claim, now dead and futile ? 'Tis thy lord
And master, that now sins in stirring it.
I have not sinn'd against thee : It is thou
That dost me wrong, t' infest with war my land :—

The Lord, the Judge of all, be judge this day
'Tween Israel's children and 'tween Ammon's children!

ZELEK. If this is Israel's answer; if instead
Of restitution, peaceable and just,
He meet King Nahash with such rude response,
I, in my master's name, do now defy
And dare him to defend, keep, vindicate,
With his sword's edge, the land he occupies:
Let then the approaching fight determine it;
And may the God, whose temple we behold
On Rabbah's mountain, bless the Ammonite!

SHOLMI. Thus be it, then—according as the war
Determines, be the justice and the judgment;
And may our God, whose temple is the Heaven,
With his salvation bless the Israelite!

SCENE V.

In front of the Hebrew Army.

JEPHTHAH, PRIEST.

JEPHTHAH. Our bands are now all ready, at the
sign
Of trumpet-peal, to march against the foe;

Approach, thou Priest of God, now to thy duty,
Speak to the people, and encourage thou
Their hearts to enter on the work of war.

PRIEST (*To the Army.*)

Hear me, O Israel ! when I speak to thee
Th' encouragement which comes to thee from God !
This day to battle 'gainst your enemies
Ye here approach : Lo ! in close wedge of war
Enrank'd, in number more than thou, they stand ;
Thou seest their horses and their chariots,
And all their glittering gallantry of war ;
Thou seest their emblem, their gold-forged god,
Before them as an ensign held on high,
To which, as to a thing of life and power,
The valiant men of Chemosh lift their eyes,
And look for help ;—O Israel fear thou not,
Let not your hearts be faint, and do not tremble,
Nor be ye terrified because of them :
For Jacob's saviour, He, that is more strong
Than th' Ammonites' vain forgery of gold,
The Lord your God, is he that goeth with you,
To fight for you, against your enemies,—
To save, and crown you in the day of war !

JEPHTHAH (*To the Army.*)

Warriors of Israel ! To the fight advance !

SCENE VI.

An eminence near the Field of Battle.

SHOLMI, JEPHTHAH, PRIEST.

SHOLMI. The Ammonite is beaten, and is fled !

JEPHTHAH. His strongest troop, that stood embattled close,

Fronting our men of Bashan and of Gilead,
In the main passage, 'tween the vineyard-hedges,—
Behold their scatter'd wreck and residue,
Hurrying with fury and wild disarray,
Up, up into their mountain-territory !
Chariots, and foot, and horsemen, with the sound
Of whip, and rattling wheels, and stamping steeds,
Tumultuous, mingled in their homeward rush,
From Israel's sword pursuing !—Stand, O friends !
A while on this commanding hillock's top ;—
Here let us stand, and breathe a moment's space,
Scanning the ruin of the nearer field,
And questioning with our eyes the farther region
On right hand and on left, for visible sign
Or demonstration, whereby we may learn

'The fate of Israel's two other bands,
Posted t' encounter Ammon's other hosts.
For—to this place, a common point, the chiefs
Of Gad and Reuben were enjoin'd to send
To me the news of the divided war.

SHOLMI. Behold, my lord, a foot-fleet messenger
Fast posting hither from the south.—His mien
Bespeaks important tidings thence.—

1ST MESSENGER.

My lord !

The son of Hashem has enforc'd my feet
To utmost speed, my tongue to faithfulness
In its report :—Me he hath charg'd to say—
The band of Ammon's children, that with front
Of glittering and protruded spears, block'd up
Passage to Israel on the southern road,
No sooner felt the cutting stony shower
Flung in their faces from ten thousand slings
Whirl'd by the Gadite warriors overhead,
Than back they slunk, stunn'd and astonished,
With disembattl'd ranks all impotent
To stand or grapple, in the farther fight
With Gareb and his band of warriors.
So, up the mountain-road I left them flying,
Disbanded and disorder'd, every man
His own commander, or commanded only

By his own fear, that spurs and urges him
To 'scape the common death which, from behind,
Comes dogging him into his mountain-house :—
Israel hath conquer'd !

PRIEST. On the northern road
A second post draws near.

2D MESS. My lord, O Prince !
I come a messenger from Abiel's host,
Charg'd to communicate to you the news,
That in the more advanc'd and northern post,
Where, near the Plane-tree, stood the Ammonite,
Enrank'd with his ally, the Arab Zabdiel,
Collected in their might, footmen, and horse,
And chariots, to attack the Reubenite,—
The battle in a moment, kindled up
By sound of trumpets upon either side,
Wax'd warm, and raged with havoc mutual,
Alternating with onset and defeat ;
Till, from his iron chariot, Zabdiel fell,
Struck by a Hebrew archer ; on the which,
The Arabians, smit with terror, took to flight,
And, after them, partakers of th' alarm,
Fled Ammon's children :—Israel straight pursu'd :
He chas'd them up their southward winding vale ;
He chas'd them up their westward winding vale ;

Ev'n to their place, the City, called, of Waters,
Beside whose plain, near to the river's edge,
Their broken ranks they rally and collect,
Around their king, who, with his chosen band
Of spear-arm'd heroes, lion-like, and bold,
There sits, the source and centre of the war.
I saw him in his golden-harness'd chariot,
High-seated, with his warriors gathered round,
His kingdom's glory, and his pride of war,
Boasting that, with their god Baal-peor's aid,
They will defend their city, and repel
Back from their gates, th' invasive Israelite :
In this o'erswelling fit of confidence
He opes his mouth in challenge, and defies
To single fight the leader of the Hebrews :
He cry'd out in our ears—
“ Before the gates of Rabbah be it fought
Between us ; and if Ammon's king shall fall,
Then shall his city be to Israel given
A spoil and plunder, Ammon's sons and daughters
Delivered up as captives to your hands ;—
But, if my god shall glorify my spear,
And give to Ammon's king the victory,
Let Israel's cities, and let Israel's sons
And daughters, be surrendered as a spoil,

A prey and plunder to the conqueror ;—
 This is the proud defiance which he sends
 To Israel's hero ; and, through him, defies
 The God of Israel.

JEPHTHAH. In th' Almighty's strength,
 The God of Israel, I accept that proud
 And bold defiance :—on thy steps again
 Go back, and be the herald to declare
 My acceptance of his haughty summons.
 Bid him take up and grasp his spear : gird on
 His brigandine of brass, his plaited fence
 Of warlike harness, make him ready all—
 The Hebrew leader hastens to the fight,
 Before the gates of Rabbah, in the front
 Of Chemosh and his temple.

MESS. At thy word,
 My lord, I speed me, with thine answer back,
 To the defying Ammonite. [*Departs.*]

JEPHTHAH (*with eyes raised to heaven*)

O Thou
 My father's God ! who hitherto hath blest
 Me and my people, in the day of war,
 Prosper thy pleasure in my hand, cast down
 The heathen boaster, that, with lying mouth
 Lifts up 'gainst Thee his idol-vanity,

And challenges thy glory and thy power !
O let the heathen know that thou art God !
Thine be the glory—let my right-hand be
The instrument thou blessest for the work !
This is my prayer—which with a vow I crown ;—
Be witness, priest of God ! to this my vow :—
*O God ! if thou this day, beneath my spear,
Shalt humble the proud Ammonite, and give
His people as a prey into mine hands,
Then it shall be, that when I, from the war,
Return in peace, whatever cometh forth
To meet me from the doors of mine own house,
Shall be the Lord's, and I shall offer it
For a burnt-offering up :—This be my vow
Upon the eve of battle—in the hour
Of preparation for the dreadful fray !*

PRIEST. Mine ears bear witness to thy virtuous
vow :—

Earth doth record—accept it, gracious Heaven !

ACT II. SCENE I.

Jephthah's House in Mizpeh.

TIRZAH, ZEBAH, MESSENGER.

TIRZAH. Proclaimer of glad tidings! welcome thou
To Jephthah's house, made happy by the words
Of thy report!

MESSENGER. I do not come as charg'd
By Israel's chief as special messenger
Unto his house, but, as a private man,
The first with news, come freshest from the host,
I publish what mine eyes have there beheld
Of Jephthah's victory.

TIRZAH. Thou bear'st the marks
Upon thy garments, feet, and countenance,
Of rapid travel.—At what time didst thou
Leave Israel's armies?

MESS. Ere the twilight fell
Last night; the sun was in his seaward stoop,
Dipping his disk behind Mount Ephraim,
When down tho Ammonites' long-flowing valley
I 'gan my travel westward.

TIRZAH. And the hosts
Of Israel then victorious stood before
The gates of Rabbath-Ammon ?

MESS. Rabbath's gates
Had then been open'd ; all her bolts and bars
Asunder had been riven, brought down, and broken
To let the vanquisher of Nahash in,
The son of Gilhad to the spoil.

ZEBAH. My father——

MESS. He, prominent in prowess and in praise,
Excelleth all the mighty——

ZEBAH. Saw'st thou him,
Amid his multitude of warriors
Up-mounting to the fortress on the hill,
Safe in his glory ?

MESS. I beheld
The prince of Israel's armies, in his glory
Ascending from the death-field, where his spear
O'erthrew the king of Ammon.

TIRZAH. Of that field,
Where Jephthah fought, and Ammon's monarch fell,
Do thou, th' eye-witness of the deeds, relate
To us, unknowing yet, eager to know,
Each circumstance and feat, from the first sound
Of clarion when the combatants engag'd,

To the last shout of triumph sent on high,
By Israel's armies.

MESS. To the house of Jephthah
These glories appertain, and are become
Its crown ;—'tis then with joyous readiness
He, who beheld, shall, what he saw, relate.—
Israel's three bands, to different posts detach'd,
From every post had driv'n the adversaries ;
As these, toward their mountain-capital,
Went flying, Israel follow'd in their rear,
With arrow, sling-shot stone, and javelin.
The routed troops, as nearer to the fort
They drew, concentrated and form'd their ranks
In one huge heaving mass around their king,
Whose presence, in his chariot mounted high,
Seem'd potent as a charm to re-enforce
And rally for a space his stricken people ;—
Yet did not Israel here relax his war ;
But, gathering close, and thickening on the foe,
Between the river and the fortress gates,
Hemm'd them about with long-directed spears,
As in an iron ever-narrowing circle.
There stood king Nahash in his chariot up ;—
And, with a desperate front, he uttered,
Mix'd with reproaches and loud scoffing scorn,

Defiance unto Israel's God and Israel ;
Extolling blasphemously his golden god,
And challenging, in that his idol's strength,
The Hebrew leader to contend with him
In single combat, bow, or sword, or spear :
Terror took all the Hebrews, when they heard
Th' insulting summons shouted from his lips ;
Their mighty shrunk ; nor dar'd one undertake
The proffer'd battle ; till at last their Prince,
Arriving, in the front of all stood forth,
And, on the terms propos'd, did in the name
Of Abraham's God, accept the controversy ;—
Straight from his lofty chariot downward leapt
The king in cuirass clad, and on with stride
Mov'd, like a giant, to confront the man
That dar'd t' encounter Ammon's champion.
The trumpets straight were blown ; the sign was given ;
And from the hand of Nahash flew the spear
With iron fenc'd, and massy as the beam
Of weaver ;—overhead it past—and sung
Harmless—and hit not him 'twas aim'd to strike.

ZEBAH. O thanks to Israel's God, by whose kind
arm

That meditated wound was turn'd aside !

MESS. The son of Gilhad, then, with high-heav'd
hand

His javelin swung, and, *May the God*, he cry'd,
Of Abraham make his servant's weapon prosper !
It flew, and Nahash fell ;—a shout of joy
Rang from the Hebrew hosts ; a sullen sound
Of murmur and incensement, ill-suppress'd,
Spread through the multitude of Ammonites,
Like southern whirlwind reeling round the tops
Of Bashan's forests ;—Soon the wrath flam'd forth ;
And in, amid the ranks of Israel,
Came, like the rush of thunder, Ammon's chariots,
With showers of weapons from a thousand hands.
Then were the Hebrew warriors by that shock
Enkindled up into a tenfold fury,
And, with ten thousand vengeance-wreaking deaths,
A bloody recompense they gave the foe.
The foe or fell or fled ;—The City of Waters
Was taken ; and the brazen-valved gates
Of Rabbath-Ammon, on whose mountain-height
Towers Chemosh in his temple, up were dash'd,
That Israel, with her prince, might enter in.
I saw them enter ; I beheld the banners
Of Jephthah borne sublime and pitched up high
Upon the fort, and Chemosh and his priests,

With all the sons of Ammon, and their daughters,
Caught in their hold, confounded, carry'd captive,
Sunk, fall'n, before the might of Israel.

TIRZAH. Thus hath Destruction seiz'd on the
destroyer,

Thus is the spoiler spoil'd :—Our God be prais'd
For this his high salvation to our land !
Gilead's and Bashan's mothers now will sing
For joy, their daughters now will all be glad,
And Mizpeh's gates be lifted up, to let
The prince of warriors in.—But, come, O thou
Gladdener of Mizpeh, and of Jephthah's house !
Approach the fountain in the mid-court—there
Wash thou from travel's dust thy feet, and take
Rest and refreshment 'neath the olive's shade.

SCENE II.

Garden of Jephthah's House.

TIRZAH, ZEBAH.

TIRZAH. Here let us sit, my daughter, underneath
This fig-tree's shade, and in the evening's cool
Enjoy to-day's glad tidings.

ZEBAH. I have brought
My psalt'ry to assist me, in my thoughts
Of exultation, and of gratitude
To Israel's God, for the high grace vouchsaf'd
Unto my father's house.

TIRZAH. Sing thou, my daughter !
Utter thy song to thy string'd instrument,
In honour of thy father. Lo ! the night,
Now drawing on, serene with all her stars,
Seems in her clear, cool calm, to harmonise
With the sweet breathings of thy pious spirit,
And with thy harp's soft harmony.

ZEBAH (*Sings to the harp.*)

1.

From where on Ammon's mountain-lands
The City of the Waters stands,
The spoiler like devouring flame,
On Reuben and Manasseh came ;
Rich Gilead's folds were swept away,
And Bashan's beauty was his prey.

2.

The highways, where such throng had been,
Without a traveller were seen ;

The villages, on hill or dell,
Had ceas'd, had ceas'd in Israel ;
On Abel's plains and Ramoth's rocks,
Were heard no bleatings of the flocks.

3.

In Sibmah's vineyards, where the sound
Of happy men, late, rose around,
There was no song of vintage-feast ;
The wine-press-shouting all had ceas'd ;
Heshbon did on her mountain mourn,
And Elealeh wept forlorn.

4.

Oh ! gladness, then, and happy day
Were taken from our land away !
The heathen lords from Rabbah's town
Our plants of Joy had trodden down ;
I wail'd the woes, that then befell
The mothers of our Israel.

5

But now a light hath come from God ;
Israel's great champion is abroad ;

God hath to Mizpeh given again
The hero, wish'd so long in vain ;
He came ; he gather'd Israel's bands ;
He marched up the mountain-lands ;

6.

He fought ; he slew ; the bars he broke
Of Ammon on his mountain-rock ;
Baal-peor's treasures up are riven ;
Her priests and princes forth are driven ;—
O Israel ! bless and thank thy God ;
Joy now in thee shall make abode !

SCENE III.

The Fortress of Rabbah.

JEPHTHAH, SHOLMI, HANAN, and other Chiefs.

JEPHTHAH. Has the foil'd foe been follow'd ?

SHOLMI. To his holds

We have pursued him.

Yet to be conquer'd ; all the work is done,

For which we overpass'd the Jabbok-stream.
God hath been gracious to our grieved land,
And, in proportion to our previous griefs,
Hath multiply'd our war's prosperities,—
Since, then, the enemies are all dry'd up,
Bootless were now the longer lingering
To Israel's chiefs, now of the war discharg'd.—
Hanan! remain thou in the mountain-fort,
With these thy Gileadites, their governor;—
Gareb! possess the cities in the plain;—
We, other chiefs, may to our household-hearths
In peace retire; and thence throughout our land
Diffuse the circling joy, each from his house,
As from a centre, till from coast to coast
Israel's whole people comprehend the joy.

SCENE IV.

Flat Roof of Jephthah's House.

TIRZAH, ZEBAH, NURSE.

TIRZAH. Look thou, my daughter, in the farthest east,

Where seems the blue sky edging the green earth ;—
Seest thou ought stirring ?

ZEBAH. O'er the vineyard-tops,
Between us and the eastern road, that leads
To Rabbath-Ammon, I discern no dust,
Cast up to heav'n by my dear father's steps,
Th' announcer of his coming.

TIRZAH. 'Tis the strength
Of our fond love and weary wishfulness,
Which makes the time to roll with slowness on,
Until my lord appear.

NURSE. The showers, that fall
High in the mountains, may with sudden rush
Have slacken'd his foot's speed.

TIRZAH. The mid-day heat,
That burns the mountains, may have haply forc'd
Th' o'erheated traveller t' exchange the broad
And sun-scorch'd highway for the cooling shade
Of forest-trees adjoining it.

NURSE. As yet
Day droops not ; and the sun, 'tween Gibeon's hill
And his far setting-place i' th' western sea,
Hangs mid-way, calling forth the rested hind
To evening's furrow-labour.

TIRZAH. There remains,

Till th' evening-star appear, sweet interval,
Next to the morning sweetest of the day,
And grateful to the traveller.

ZEBAH. Ere the dew
Of twilight falls, the trumpet's voice aloud
From Jabbok's ford shall publish his approach,
Inviting us to meet him.

TIRZAH. Deem it so,
O daughter! and prepare thee for his coming;
Attire thee in thy goodliest array,
The meetest for thy father in his triumph;
The chaplet broider'd and set up with gold,
During his absence thy glad chamber-task,
Now finish'd and adapted for his brows,
Take in thy lap to crown him when thou meet'st;
The song thou hast indited for his love
Have ready on thy lip; and in thy hand
Thy harp, to greet him with a burst of joy.
Thy choir of damsels, too, the bloom and flower
Of Mizpeh's daughters, taught to share thy song
And dance, have all about thee, ministrant,
With viols, harps, and timbrels, to swell out
And furnish to the full the gratulation
With every note, and chord, and sound, and step,
Becoming that glad welcome;—Look again

My daughter! towards the eastern road, across
The summits of the vineyards;—Lo, methinks,
A dust uprises!

ZEBAH. Near the white watch-tower
I see a whirl of ruddy dust ascending
O'er the green tree-tops;—Ha! It follows on—
It marks the line of path—It cometh down—
Draws toward Mizpeh nearer.

TIRZAH. Take thy harp;
Gather thy damsels—Go, my daughter, go,
And meet thy father 'tween the vineyard rows,
On this side the Jabbok.

ZEBAH. Happy day!
And happy hour! to give me back again
My father!

ACT III. SCENE I.

Vineyard between Mizpeh and the Jabbok.

ZEBAH, DAMSELS, *with Musical Instruments.*

ZEBAH. Here stand, O sisters, in this cool recess
Of vineyard-shade, beside the way—here, stand
A little while, until the trumpet's note
Warn us of their ascending up the path
From the stream's bank.

1ST DAMSEL. They cross the Jabbok—now
The trumpet, hark ! proclaims that they have reach'd
The river's hither bank.

2D DAMSEL. I see the prince
Of Mizpeh in the fore-ward marching up,
His spearmen following after.

ZEBAH. Forward now,
Upon the way, O sisters !—right in front
To meet him in the march ;—Each in the dance
Assume her place, and let both voice and hand
Send forth loud gratulation ?

[*They begin the dance and song, with
the sound of harp and timbrel.*]

1. (*All sing.*)

Awake my ten-string'd glory ! wake ;
My voice ! sweet celebration make ;
Sing praise, sing praise, to him who hath
Freed Israel from the spoiler's wrath ;
Make loud the timbrel ring ; advance
To meet him in the measur'd dance !

2. (*ZEBAH alone.*)

Follow me, sisters !—I will lead
The song, and in the dance precede ;
The chaplet, which my fingers wove,
Dear token of a daughter's love,
Shall gird his temple ; mine own hand
Shall crown him with the beauteous band !

3. (*All.*)

Mountains of Mizpeh ! lift the voice ;
Ye vales ; ye vineyards ! all rejoice ;
Your prince returns ; Behold him come
Exulting in his triumph home !
In front he marches ; in the rear
His warriors walk with ported spear.

4. (All.)

Approach, thou Champion of the Lord !
 Now put aside thy spear and sword !
 Joy, joy thy glorious entry waits ;
 And Mizpeh lifts on high her gates ;
 Thy consort for thy coming longs ;
 Thy daughter hails thee home with songs !

5. (ZEBAH alone.)

Follow me, sisters ! I will lead
 The song, and in the dance precede ;
 The chaplet, which my fingers wove,
 Dear token of a daughter's love,
 Shall gird his temples ;—Mine own hand
 Will crown him with the beauteous band !

(JEPHTHAH *approaches—his daughter advances to meet him.*)

ZEBAH. Joy to my father ! Joy !

(JEPHTHAH, *starting back with surprise.*)

Oh God ! My daughter !

Thou !—Thou !—my daughter !—Oh !

ZEBAH.

Look on me, Father !

JEPHTHAH. Out on thee, O my child ! O where-
fore, wherefore,

Appear'st thou here before me ?

ZEBAH. I have come

With songs to meet thee in thy home-approach,

To crown thee with this coronet of love,

Woven for thee in my chamber when I sate

Pining for thy return ;—Ah me ! thou look'st not

Upon me and the broider'd gift I bear !

Look on me, O my father !

JEPHTHAH. O my God !

Why was I born for this ?—would I had fallen

Beneath the weapon of the Ammonite,

And not have met my dearest, only child,

Here, here, the first—thus, thus, disastrously !

ZEBAH. What meanest, thou, O Father ? Hast
thou not

Seen thy desire upon thine enemies ?

Has not the God of Israel been with thee,

And brought thee home, in all a warrior's joy,

To meet thy people, Gilead's sons and daughters,

Thy wife, thy daughter, now from Mizpeh's gates

Pour'd to salute thee ?

JEPHTHAH. Speak not of it, child !

O speak not of a warrior's happiness ;

Spare, spare, thy salutations—would to God
Thy going forth, thy songs, and thy salutes,
Had been forborne!—thy virgin-choir and dance!—
And thou, first songster in thy father's praise,—
Alas! thou knowest not how they have slain
Thy father's peace for ever!

ZEBAH.

O what is this?

Such unexpected words—what mean they, father?
Alas!

He looks not on me still— still in his eye
From me and from the chaplet in my hand
Turn'd off as in displeasure! (*She weeps*)
O God! reveal to me my sin; what crime
Have I committed in my ignorance
Against the father that once lov'd me so,
That thus his eye refuses me, and I
Am shut out, as a stranger, from his heart!
O let me know mine error or my crime,
That I may yet repair it, and regain
A father's greetings and a father's love!
Instruct me, O my God! (*looking towards heaven*)

JEPHTHAH.

O weep not, weep not

Ill-fated, loving child!—yea, for thy love
Ill-fated!—'Tis not thou that hast been erring;
Thou art all innocence, and too much love;

'Tis I thy father that have err'd—'Tis I
That have against thee sinn'd—My lips, too rash,
Have cruelly involv'd thy innocence,
And made thee sufferer from thy father's error.
Alas, I thought not—pardon me my child,
O Pardon me! (*He kisses her*)
Thou canst not pardon me—'tis a crime too huge
For thy forgiving—do not then entreat me—
Escape me—flee thy father—get thee up
Into the mountains with thy virgin-choir,
And dwell thou there within some secret cave
Deep, deep, and dark and inaccessible,
Which thy sad father's steps may ne'er have skill
Amid the mazes of the wilderness
To search out, and to penetrate!
Yet flee me not, my daughter—Oh, no, no—
Thou must not, and thou canst not—thou art mine—
I love thee—thou art due to me—thou canst not
Escape the fatal pledge, remediless,
Fallen from my lips!

ZEBAH. What fatal pledge, O father?
Thy words are full of mystery—but thine eyes,
That look not on me with their wonted smile,
Speak secret sorrows, too, too full of meaning;—
He weeps, alas! and speaks not!

JEPHTHAH.

(after sobs of weeping)

Happy thou,

My child ! more happy in thy ignorance,
Than I in my most miserable knowledge !—
Ah me ! let not the day be bless'd wherein
I left my house in Ishtob, to lift up
My spear against the foes of Israel !
O that the battle-field had been my grave !
Then I had died in peace, and not have seen
This labour and this sorrow, that my days
Should be consum'd, and Jephthah and his house
Be made a spectacle to Israel !—
Leave me my daughter ! *(Repels her from him.)*

ZEBAH. Miserable me !

My father flings me from his heart—Receive
And refuge me, sweet comrades.

1st DAMSEL.

See ! the hero hides

His head within his mantle-folds—his heart
Throbs with some strong unconquerable grief,—
Unknown save to himself ;—
Daughter of Jephthah ! let us hence remove ;
—Joyous we came, unjoyful we return ;—
Pass onward, O my sisters !

SCENE II.

Chamber in Jephthah's House.

ZEBAH, TIRZAH.

ZEBAH. O mother !

TIRZAH. My daughter, all in tears ! what hath
befallen,

That thus in sorrow to thy father's house
Thou art return'd ?

ZEBAH. Ask not of me, my mother,
Enquire it of my father !

TIRZAH. Hath he not
O'erpass'd the Jabbok as a conqueror ?
Hath he not met thee with a kind embrace ?
Didst not thou go out with thy virgin-troop
The first to meet him on his homeward way ?
—Woes me ! thy look shows some befortun'd sorrow ;
Not thus thou wentest forth with song and harp,
With step more light than that of mountain-roe,
Thy cheeks as two bright beds of morning-flowers,
Thy forehead crown'd with gladness and with joy ;—
Not thus thou left'st me to fulfil thine errand

Of tenderest, sweetest, love—thou weepest now,
And tears are on thy cheek !

ZEBAH.

O mother, mother !

I have offended ;—I have sinn'd ;—though free
From self-reproach, unconsciously I have sinn'd,
Against my father, and my God, and thee ;
Oh, by a mother's love ! reveal wherein]
I have offended—let me know the cause,
That I may heal mine error, and recover
Th' affections I have lost !

TIRZAH.

Speak thou not thus,

My child !—conceive not, in thy soul's distress,
Thoughts so unworthy of its purity ;
Thou art not fallen in our most dear esteem,
Hast suffer'd no abatement in our love ;
Thou art all blameless ; and thy tenderness,
By every act, but more and more deserves
Richer returns from father and from mother
Of corresponding sweet affection ;—
If error hath befallen, 'tis not in thee—
'Tis in thy mother or thy father ;—Say
What, in thy going out, hath happen'd thee
So strange, to mar thy cheer so suddenly,
To fill thine eyes with tears, thy sinless heart,
With cruel accusations of thyself,

And me, thy mother, with such anxious fears ?
Saw'st thou thy father ?—Did he give to thee
The fatherly salute ?

ZEBAH. I saw him—but he gave
To me no fatherly salute ; his eye
Appear'd to loathe or disacknowledge me,
His daughter, as I led the virgin-choir,
And met him with the greetings of my song.
His ears seem'd shut against our gratulations,
His heart against communion with our joy ;
He gave no sign of joyous interchange ;
But stood estrang'd to me and to my gift,
As if o'erpassioned, talking to his heart
Of some unspeakable and secret grief
That had wreck'd all his peace.

TIRZAH.Thy cheek,
Wet with the tears that his estrangement caus'd,
Did he not kiss?

ZEBAH. Alack ! it was a kiss
That sprang not out of joy, but melancholy,
A kiss of separation, not of welcome,
That seem'd to signify a sad farewell ;
'Twas ominous—as were the dreadful words
That came with it, and sounded in mine ears

As terrible commands, forbidding me
My father's sight forever !

TIRZAH. Woe is me,
My daughter! some calamity hath touch'd
Thy father's spirit ;—Be thou comforted ;—
His soul's obscurity to-day will clear ;—
But see, he comes—not cheerful as was wont,
But sorrowful, his warrior-mantle rent,
His head with ashes stain'd ;—Retire, my daughter !

(ZEBAH *withdraws*—JEPHTHAH *approaches*
from the opposite side.)

Leave me to meet thy father.

TIRZAH. Hail to my lord,
And welcome to his house !

JEPHTHAH O woman, woman!
Bid me not hail, nor welcome to my house!

TIRZAH. What means my husband by these
startling words?

JEPHTHAH. Look on these staining ashes—on
 this robe

Rent by my anguish—these will not announce
That Jephthah to his home returneth happy ;
If these are feeble to express the pang
Gnawing within, this bitter flood of tears
More plainly will reveal it. *(He weeps.)*

TIRZAH.

O my lord !

Thy sorrow terrifies my soul—What pang,
What sudden arrow of heav'n-sent affliction
Hath pierc'd thy peaceful spirit ?

JEPHTHAH.

Pity me !

It is not God's infliction—'tis my own—
Mine own—th' infliction of my own rash lips—
The words of dreadful import have been utter'd !

TIRZAH. . What words, my lord ? Thou speak'st
a riddle to me !

JEPHTHAH. O these dire words ! which ne'er
should have been utter'd,

But now are seal'd—are seal'd indelibly
In Time's black, awful, unforgiving book !

TIRZAH. Still dost thou dissappoint me in thine
answer,

Nor let'st me be thy consort in thy sorrow ;
O for mine own, thine, and thy daughter's sake,
Admit me to the secrets of thy soul.

JEPHTHAH. My daughter !—she is no longer
mine nor thine—

She is devoted—irredeemably
Devoted—

TIRZAH. By what vow, my lord, or where,
Or when ?

JEPHTHAH. By his, whose words admit of no recall,
Her miserable father !

TIRZAH. O my lord !

JEPHTHAH. 'Tis past—'tis seal'd !

TIRZAH. Forbid it, gracious heaven !

JEPHTHAH. Would that I could undo it !

TIRZAH. By what act
Irreparable, hast thou vow'd away
Thy daughter from thine arms ?

JEPHTHAH. The utter'd words,
Though hastily pronounc'd, were in their scope
Enlarg'd, not narrow'd to that single issue,
To which th' untoward falling-out hath led,—
An issue un conjectur'd, unforeseen,
But now, to me, my daughter, and my house,
Stamp'd—irretrievable calamity !
O hapless was the hour, when, from her chamber,
My daughter went to meet me gratulant !
Unblessed were the steps, that with her choir
She took, to face me foremost in the dance !
She met me first,—and she has brought me low—
She, gentle, loving, too, too-duteous child,
Has brought her father low !

TIRZAH. How so, my lord ?—
Her joy to see her father, in his triumph,

Urg'd, and made bold, her blushing modesty,
To meet thee of her maiden-troop the first ;
In this, lay ought of error ? Herein, chief,
Did not she pay due honour ?

JEPHTHAH.

In this—in this,—

Too much she honour'd—she hath humbled me ;
Yea, brought me very low !
For—I, alas, had open'd to the Lord
My mouth, and in the day of battle, vow'd
A vow to God, and said, that, if he should
Deliver th' Ammonite into my hands,
Then, whatsoever shall come forth to meet me
From mine own house, when, from the battle, I
Return in peace, shall surely be the Lord's ;
And I, unto the Lord, shall offer it
As his burnt-offering up ;—Thus, thus, alas !
I op'd my mouth, nor can I now go back.

TIRZAH.

O VOW

Cruel, calamitous to thee and thine !
Heedless and unreflecting was the heart
That gender'd it ! Most rash and unadvis'd
The lip that did pronounce it !
O my devoted, dear, death-doomed child !
My daughter ! how shall I acquaint thine ear
With these oerwhelming tidings of a woe

That doth belong to thee—and to thy mother—
Thy father—and to all our house,—Alas!
To thee, my daughter, most! [*She rushes out.*]

SCENE III.

House of the Priest.

JEPHTHAH, PRIEST.

JEPHTHAH. O thou, who with thine ears didst
 hear me pour,
Amid the battles' bustle, the ru'd words,
That now, alas! as with a hedge of thorns,
Circle me in, inextricably, with trouble,—
Consider thou my soul's perplexity;
O weigh thou (if thou mayest,) in the scales
Of mild interpretation, th' unweigh'd words
That came, devoting, from a heart devout!
The purpose was all-pious,—O let not
The consummation be a deed so harsh,
Unfatherly, and sinning against piety,
As ev'n in thought doth stagger so my soul!
Heav'n, who is merciful, may overpass

A non-fulfilment, and a meant neglect,
Proceeding thus from mercy.

PRIEST. Heav'n accepted,
And Earth recorded, the free-proffer'd vow ;—
It cannot be recall'd—She is devoted—
By thine own words, thy daughter is devoted
Unto the Lord !

JEPHTHAH. The words were undeliberate ;—
Amid th' anxiety and crowd of war,
Cast up to heaven in casual utterance,
As token of acknowledgment to Him
To whom belong war's issues ;—what was thrown
Out from between the teeth, without forecast,
And weigh'd premeditation of the heart—
Can Heav'n approve ? and by severe and strict
Interpretation, claim inexorably
As due ? the shedding of a daughter's blood,
As the completion of a parent's vow,
From the rash-vowing parent ?

PRIEST. In that law
Given by the heav'n-taught Moses for our guide,
The rashness of the vower enters not
Into th' instruction, as of force to change,
Affect, or nullify the law's award.
The law enjoins not, recommendeth not,

To any man, entangled howsoe'er
In wars, or jeopardies, to make such vows
As may infringe upon life's sacredness,
Or desolate by death the family circle ;
But, when such vows, how rash soe'er, are made,
And are propounded with free voice to heav'n,
The pledge, to heav'n proclaimed, must be fulfill'd ;
The law is rigid, without reference
To wariness or forethought in the vower,
Proclaiming, in its' plainness, loud and clear,
That every thing devoted is most holy
Unto the Lord ;* that none, who is devoted
Of men, shall be by them redeem'd ; but shall
Be surely put to death : These are the terms,
Clear, simple, unencumber'd with exception,
Of our most holy law.

JEPHTHAH.

Ah, miserable !

Distracted thus—thus oppositely drawn,
Between Loves' cords twin'd close about my heart,
And the rude bonds my oath has laid upon me !
O whither, whither, shall I scape from anguish !
On this side, perjury and breach of faith,
Heav'n's execration, persecution, wrath,
With man's deserv'd contempt, and contumely,

* See Leviticus, chap. xxvii. ver. 28, 29.

Heap'd up upon me as a perjurer ;
On that side, my dear daughter, mine own blood,
My only child, mine and her mother's hope,
By her own parent yielded as a victim,
Falling beneath the sacrificer's knife !
Think not upon it, O my soul !

PRIEST. Go, prince
Of Israel!—fortify thy soul for this;—
Alas ! thine own mouth hath sore troubled thee!

SCENE IV.

Tirzah's Chamber.

ZEBAH, TIRZAH.

ZEBAH. Weep not, O mother ! 'Tis the hand of
God
Upon us and our house !

TIRZAH. O my child !
Had with his heavy hand God touched us,
And, by disease or sickness, summon'd thee
To his own happy world, unmurmuring I
Would have resign'd into his mighty hand

Thee, whom his goodness had but lent to us ;—
But thus, thus cruelly and haplessly,
To be dragg'd off from thy griev'd mother's side
A victim—to die thus !—O God of heaven !
Thou, who art wont to send thine angels down
T' encamp about the house of them that fear thee,
And save them from their troubles, be thou nigh
To us, that are of broken heart ! Give comfort
To thine afflicted !

ZEBAH. To my father most,
The faithful, who hath bound himself to heaven
At his own blood's expense !—Him, him may God
Support in his soul's trial !—He hath sav'd
His country ; God by him hath taken vengeance
Of Ammon's children ; and his daughter dies
A death of honour, the pact stipulated
To Heaven, for triumph o'er his enemies ;
And she will triumph in fulfilling it ;
Not, in her glory, less than he whose spear
Achiev'd the prize of battle. Fear not, mother !
God will support us !

TIRZAH. O my daughter ! thou
Dost in thy meekness and submission give
A lesson to thy parents too sublime :—
O into me infuse thy spirit's calmness ;

Teach me, thy mother, thy serenity ;
T' endure the torturing thought of loss of thee ;
To lose my solace in a world, thenceforth
Made but a vale of tears by thy departure ;
To hear thy harp-consorted voice no more ;
To see the place where thou at table sat'st
For ever empty, and to sit, alone
And weeping-weary, in the happy chamber,
Where thou wert wont to feast me with thy song !

ZEBAH. O mother, greater are Heav'n's sacred
pleasures
Than those that spring of frail humanity !

TIRZAH. Ah me ! The cares, and fears, and tears,
and joys,
And all a mother's first anxieties,
In nurturing thee, her only, only stay,
In fixing thy yet-tottering infant-steps,
In watching thy fair virgin-growth, that seem'd
A graceful olive twining round our wall—
Her hope, who, in the coming eve of life,
(She trusted), would support her faltering steps,
And close her eyelids in her dying hour—
All these fond thoughts and expectations
Blasted, cut off—and desolation's gloom
Hopelessly settling o'er a mother's heart !

ZEBAH. God will compensate thee with other
joys,
My mother !

TIRZAH. Alas ! the House of Jephthah ! It alone,
Amid the many thousand families
Of Gilead and of Bashan that rejoice
In Jephthah's victory—Jephthah's house alone
Is struck with sadness and with misery !
And, when the mothers of our land receive
Their captiv'd daughters back again from his
Victorious hand, their champion of deliverance,
Who hath triumph'd and led captivity
Heroically captive—his own house,
For country given away, instead of joy
Is fill'd with sorrow, his lone consort reft
Of daughter, and the daughter suffering doom
Beyond a captive's worst and cruellest !
Oh ! 'tis too much—a sacrifice beyond
The capabilities and powers of Nature !—
Unhappy, unforesighting, unkind father,
Beneficent to others, to his own
Too reckless and unsparing !

ZEBAH. Spare, O mother !
These frettings ; spare thy consort, O Belov'd !
Let no untender or repining word

Fly forth against him ;—That indeed would be
The worst and heaviest part of this our trial,
Whereby th' Almighty proves us.

TIRZAH.

How may I,

O child ! forbear to fret at him—my husband—
That doth unchild me ? was it not his mouth
That spoke, uncall'd-for and unnecessarily,
The death-charg'd words ? O happy ! had he been
But silent, and not, of his own accord,
Chain'd himself down into such dire necessity,
By a few winged words ejaculated
Forth of the lip ! Thy father's silence, then,
Had been our safety and our happiness ;
And we, to-day, like Mizpeh's other mothers,
Would have rejoic'd :—But now, we are the sad ;
They happy !

ZEBAH.

Jephthah's house shall in its fame
Flourish amid the families of Israel,
When Mizpeh's mothers are uncelebrated :
O let the thought of thy dear daughter's glory
Sustain thee, mother, when, without her thou
Walk'st through the Baca of this passing life,
Onward and upward to thy God !

TIRZAH.

My child !

Sweet are thine answers, yet they do but more

Excite that sorrow, in thy mother's breast,
Which, in thy goodness, thou wouldst fain repress :
O, had it pleas'd my God ! (Heav'n pardon me
If I do speak unwisely) that, instead
Of thee my only child, thy mother had
Advanc'd to meet thy father—had that vow
Fall'n but on me ! that so thou might'st have liv'd,
I died !

ZEBAH. My mother ! let us not arraign
The providence of Heaven ;—What hath befallen
Hath fallen out in wisdom.

TIRZAH. Nought for me,
I see all round, but sorrow, sorrow, sorrow ;—
O house, O walls, O chamber, weep for me !
Weep with me, and for me ! Maids of my house,
Mothers of Mizpeh weep for me !—Alas !
The suffering is too much ! Angels of Grace
Support me !

[*She swoons and falls into the arms
of her daughter.*]

SCENE V.

A Chamber.

ZEBAH.

ZEBAH. 'Tis still'd—the rage of grief ;—my
mother's breast,

Exhausted by her too much suffering,
Beats calmer ; and, with words of consolation,
I left her, sooth'd into tranquillity.
Oh—now my heart is left unto itself,
Flow, flow, my tears ; weep, weep, my streaming
eyes,

A flood of sorrow for my father's house,
For my dear father, for my anguish'd mother,
For me myself—Ah ! no, not for myself ;—
To pour down tears of sorrow for myself,
It were too weak, too like to a regret
At the sad issue that involves my life ;
And yet—they needs must come—(*She weeps*)—

Excuse, O God !

These tears of nature ;—they flow not from ought
To thee rebellious, or thy Providence :—

I am prepar'd—I go—my victim-life
Is ready, ready, for the sacrifice :
And yet—to leave so soon my much-belov'd
And loving parents, with their hearts all-torn
By a departure unto them so sad ;
To leave my sweet companions, with the whom
So glad I climb'd the flow'ry hill of Life ;
To leave this dear delicious light of God,
His sun, and moon, and stars, and earth, and all
His beauteous, boundless world, spread round about
me,
The ocean of his glory, still inviting
My young and ravish'd eyes to feed themselves
With His most rich and unexhausted pleasures—
To leave all these—to say, Farewell to these—
To die so prematurely, ere I well
Have known God, or his works! (*She weeps.*)
Weep, weep, my heart—
Yet sink not, O my heart !
Arouse thee—leave all these—leave father, mother,
Companions, God's bright works, sun, moon, and
stars,
And, in exchange, take what excells them all,
O take thy God himself !—
Rejoice then, heart, and take thy bliss in him !—

'Tis fix'd—I am prepar'd—I go—my life
Is ready, ready for the sacrifice !

JEPHTHAH. (*who enters*) I heard a voice—my
daughter !

ZEBAH. O my father ! (*She embraces him.*)

JEPHTHAH. She sinks into my arms—O thou
most hapless !

At once the grief, and gladness of my soul,
How canst thou thus embrace thy cruel father ?

ZEBAH. Out of my filial tenderness and love,
And to regain the kindness of that smile,
That made me so o'er-blessed heretofore ;
Look now upon me, father !

JEPHTHAH. Spare, spare my child,
These filial sweet caresses unto me,
Of them so undeserving !

ZEBAH. Say not so,
O father !—thou deserv'st them more and more.
Art thou not he, whose champion-spear hath wrought
Deliverance to thy country ? He who prov'd
His patriot-spirit, by conditioning
With Heav'n for victory, in terms which Heav'n,
Accepting, hath now ratified and seal'd,
By a completion rich to Israel
Of glory ?

JEPHTHAH. Rich to Israel, to myself,
Most desolating, making me poor of thee,
The gem and jewel of thy father's house,
My dear and only child !

ZEBAH. Ah, no ! thou hast
Above the thousand daughters of our land
Thy daughter's name and reputation rais'd :—
Hast, by thy poisoning her in the same scale
With Israel's victory o'er his enemies,
Advanc'd her worth, made precious her esteem
Above the rate of women :—She is now
The gem and jewel of her father's house,
Set and enchas'd within her country's glory,
Unperishing, and excellent in brightness
Beyond the gold of Uphaz.

JEPHTHAH. Thy filial love,
O daughter ! doth too much enravish thee,—
It makes thy dutiful and lenient soul
Too much forgiving of thy father's error,—
Or, shall I call it error, or misfortune,
Or crime—that rued, and rash, and rapid act,
Which, though compris'd in a few moments' space,
Is yet most durable in its infliction,
Has struck a sword into my house's peace,
Made my lone house a wilderness for ever,

Robb'd me of thee, and brought—Fly back my soul,
Approach not the sad sequel—'tis too full
Of ghastliness to think of!—Would I could
Make void my pledge's terms, and, stead of thee,
The innocent, dear, daughter, substitute
The lost and erring father! would that Heaven
Would forego the strict claim, and take, in mercy,
Me, the devoting, for the sad devoted,
Me, who deserve, for her, the undeserving!

ZEBAH. O father! in thy sorrow tempt not
 Heaven

With quer'lous thoughts, most near to fretfulness:
Ev'n from my father's mouth, I may not hear
Words that accuse my father; He must be
Unblam'd, ev'n by himself; his aim, his act,
Held honourable, just, and virtuous,
Flowing from country's love, and, by th' event,
Link'd in with country's triumph:—'tis to me
That lustre all accrues,—I fall triumphant
Upon the altar of my country, fall
A sacrifice, illustrious by the glory
That hath o'erpaid and overbalanc'd it.
Then, grieve not, father! rather joy with me
At an adjustment, and a latter end,
Crown'd with a garland of such lofty honour,—

Thou hast unto the Lord open'd thy mouth ;
Do to me, then, according to the word
Which hath proceeded from thy mouth ; prepare
Altar and altar's implements, and all
The fitments seemly for the sacrifice ;
Lead forth thy daughter to her scene of glory ;
She is prepared ; she goes with thee not loath,
But willing ; and her own untrembling feet
Shall carry her to the altar.

JEPHTHAH.

O thou spirit

Sublime ! devotedly magnanimous !
Who, in thy maiden meekness and thy youth,
Mak'st thy self-chastis'd father yield before thee,
And do thee homage, as a mind not earthly,
Soft as thy sex, but, as an angel, firm,
O how shall I accost thee ? Shall I call
Thee, Daughter ? Is it thou, whom, with a few
Swift-utter'd words, I have so thrown away ?
O is it thou, who must—so soon—alas !
Be yielded up—and, by a father's hand,
As a thing forfeited and due ? So much
Of sweet endearment and of excellence !

ZEBAH. Yet father, ere the offering be completed,
One thing I beg—let it be done for me—
'Tis but short respite for the sake of love.

JEPHTHAH. Speak, O my angel-child ! Thou
 art to me

As Urim ; and the bidding of thy words
Is as the chiming voice of oracle,
That ravishes the ears unto obedience.

ZEBAH. Ere that be done to me, which hath pro-
 ceeded

Out of thy mouth, allow me for a space,
Attended by my fellows, Mizpeh's maids,
Friends of my youth, and co-mates of the choir,
To walk on Mizpeh's mountains up and down,
And sing our virginal sweet Farewell-song
Unto the woods, and hills, and fountains clear,
Aye intermixing tender lamentations
For my lost hopes, and my virginity.

JEPHTHAH. Be it according to thy wish and word,
High-minded child !—for thou hast conquer'd me ;
And, even against thyself, I am all thine.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

Chamber.

ZEBAH, NURSE.

ZEBAH. O thou, who in thy bosom once did
 carry,
And cherish me, a child—guide of my steps !
And trainer of my spirit, to whose ears
I did commit my every childish care,
And childish want, which were so readily
Answer'd by thee, with motherly affection—
Assist me now, thou faithful one ;—again
I need thy kindly heart, and helpful hand,
Though not, as heretofore, t' abet the joy
And schemes of playful childhood ;—Childhood's
 days
Are over, and their pleasing pastimes gone ;
New days now roll upon us other duties,
And call up other and more serious thoughts.

NURSE. My Child, (for by that name, both from
 my love

And foster-privilege, I do address thee,) Thou, who didst sleep an infant in my bosom, And whom, in thy young spirit's amiableness, Mine eyes, admiringly, have watch'd and follow'd, Ev'n to this hour, when I behold thee sad And cumber'd with the dire calamity, That hath befall'n thy father and his house— O inauspicious vow ! O fatal issue !— —Accursed be the hour when Gilead's chiefs Dragg'd forth thy father from the tranquil land Of Ishtob, to take up his spear for them, And fight their battle out, that they might live Quiet amid their sunny vales, whilst he, He and his house, disquieted, convuls'd, Should—worse than die !

ZEBAH. Spare, spare, I pray, these words That strike at heaven ;—It is not fit that we Should fret as sinful murmurers, and say To Providence, Thy issues are untoward ! 'Tis ours to be obedient, and comply As God directs the current.

NURSE. God himself,
My daughter, doth forbid not our regrets,
Our struggles to stem up the counter-current,

When Prudence justifies and gives an aim :—
—O was it then for this—an end like this—
So unexpected, cruel, terrible,
That I have in my bosom carry'd thee,
Tended thy pillow in thy infant slumbers,
Fed thee with honey and with milk, train'd up
Thy lisping tongue to syllable the name
Of God, thy heart to marvel at his works,
Taught thy fair feet to vary forth the dance,
Thy fingers to call music from the harp?
All, all, for this, a termination hateful,
Abhorr'd, as most unsightly, and unpiteous,
For eye to look upon, or heart to think !—
—O thou my daughter, dearer unto me
Than is the blood now fluttering fearfully
About my aged heart—hearken to me—
List to my love-urg'd counsel—Flee these walls—
Thy father, kindred, country, flee them all—
Escape man's cruelty—get thee away
Up to the mountains, and the forest-shades ;
There lurk—there save thee 'mong the forest-beasts,
And live unharm'd, forgetful of thy father,
And reckless of his vow.

ZEBAH.

Where a vow's pledge

Has solemnly been given before the Lord,
How faithless and unholy to infringe
The vow in faith thus given !

NURSE. 'Tis piety,
Where the fulfilment's fraught with inhumanity,
In thee to be unpious ;—'Tis the end,
That characters the whole preliminaries,
And where the sequel is a thing abominable,
Too hideous to be nam'd, the leading acts,
Though simple in themselves, yet, from that bad
And barb'rous consequence they introduce,
Borrow a barb'rous and a bloody tinge.

ZEBAH. Where man with God hath bargain'd for
the good
Of his afflicted country, and that good
Hath follow'd on the bargain's terms, 'tis just
That man should, what he cov'nanted, fulfill ;
He stands a bounden debtor to his God.

NURSE. High Heav'n, my child, in dealing forth
success,
Doth not on such low terms make covenant
With man, his creature ; what our God bestows,
He giveth freely, like himself in grace,
Without the bondage of such mean conditions.

ZEBAH. God's perfect law, to Israel's sons the
guide,
Consign'd for sureness to the brass and stone,
Commands, that what of men shall be devoted
By man unto the Lord, shall be most holy,
And shall, as such, to him be offer'd up.

NURSE. God's law of mercy, by his own wise
hand
Engrav'd for sureness on the human heart,
Forbids, that man, by deeds unmerciful,
Should honour him whose mercy shineth forth
His darling and eternal attribute.

ZEBAH. Mercy is mighty, and shines glorious forth
When not out-faced by a mightier claim ;
When world-controlling Justice rears his voice,
She yields, in modest silence, from her suit.

NURSE. Mercy, my child, upon a theme like this,
Will never yield ; stern Justice back will shrink,
And hazard not himself and his awards,
By a too harsh enforcement, that may shake
Among mankind his fair authority,—
Flee therefore, O my child ! Forget thy father,
Forget his vow !

ZEBAH. A father's sway extends,

O'er all the life and conduct of his children.
When he commands, they must obey ; so long
As they abide beneath paternal roof,
They must be passive to paternal rule.

NURSE. When fathers ask of unoffending children
Things against which Man's ripened heart revolts,
Ev'n to the sure destruction of themselves
In their own blood, 'tis righteous to rebel ;
'Tis wisdom in the child, then to withstand ;
And stubbornness is kindness towards him
'Gainst whom it is rebell'd—Flee, then, my child !
Escape thy father, and thy father's house !

ZEBAH. O thou the guide, and guardian of my
youth !

I hear thee, yet assent not to thy words ;
In vain thou plead'st ; in vain thou, in thy love,
Essay'st to tutor me in this new law
Of disobedience to a father's will ;
As if his honour, and a daughter's love,
And life, were set in strife and opposition.
Ah, no—

His honour, which is greater, is as mine ;
My life, which is the less, is his ; they both
Are as of one, and so accord together,
That, to fill up the measure of the greater,

The lesser willingly doth yield itself.
 There is no strife and no repugnancy ;
 I yield myself, not backward, but in joy,
 As one, whose life hath cheaply purchased
 Her country's glory, and shall firmly seal
 Her father's faithfulness.—Essay not, then,
 To stay me, thou, whose voice's honour'd sound
 Thy daughter hitherto has e'er obey'd ;
 'Gainst Heaven thou can'st not sway me ; herein I
 Must be triumphant ev'n o'er thee—O suffer
 And pardon, then, that here I disobey thee—
 It is the first—'twill be the last—forgive
 This, this, my only disobedience ! (*She falls on her
 neck.*)

NURSE. Thou killest me, my child ! O cease such
 words—

I am subdued—I will no longer plead ;—
 To thy affectionate and ardent spirit
 I render up myself ;—Yet still to me,
 Unfold, as to thy friend, thy thoughts ;—Be that
 Now, now, my only suit.

ZEBAH. Ere that my father
 Shall do to me according to his vow,
 I go, with his allowance and fair will,
 To Mizpeh's mountains, I and my co-mates,

The fellow-songsters of that virgin-choir,
That met my father in his homeward-march ;—
There up and down the mountains, I and they,
Free-footed, will, with song and psaltery,
Walk in the dewy morn, at sunny noon,
And shadow-lengthening eve, beside the rills,
And founts, or underneath the fir-tree's shades,—
A new, sad, band of mountain-choristers,
Making the mountain-hollows to respond
In long, sweet echoes, to our lengthen'd notes
Of lamentation, whilst I sing my wail
Over my father's lost and wither'd hopes—
His wither'd hopes—and my sweet tender youth
Cut off from blessing with fresh shoots his house.
Go, then, my faithful dame !—of mine intent
Apprise my dear companions, Atarah,
Miriam, and Shelomith, and Abigail,
Ahijah's fair-hair'd daughter Arubah,
Mahlah and Milcah, and the other maids,
My playmates on the Jabbok's flowery banks ;
Bid them put on their simplest, lightest, robes,
Their mountain-mantles, their sun-baffling veils,
Their mountain-sandals, best to guard their steps
Amid the rocky summits ; bid them take
In hand their timbrels, harps, and psalteries,

That we may well accompany our song
With the struck chime of many-sounding strings.
To-morrow, ere the day-star shall be hovering
O'er Ammon's hills, be they prepar'd to join
My steps, forth-coming from my father's house,
To Mizpeh's eastern gate. There let us meet,
And thence, ascending, take our hill-ward way,
Beneath the sweet beams of the morning-star.

NURSE. To one not slow or slothful to fulfil
Thy will, thou dost communicate this charge ;
To-morrow, ere the star of dawn be risen,
Thy partners shall be gather'd at the gate.

ZEBAH. Thou too, dear dame, be there ;—Till
then, farewell !

NURSE. Till morn, farewell, my bosom-cherish'd
child !

The God of Jacob be thy comforter !

SCENE II.

The Eastern Gate of Mizpeh.

NURSE, ZEBAH, AND THE CHOIR OF DAMSELS.

NURSE. (*Advancing to the gate*)

Watchman, that keep'st the city! from thy tower
Where, during the night-watches, thou dost stand,
Descend!

WATCHMAN. (*From above*)

What damsel-train, in goodly robes
Apparell'd, comes so early hitherward,
Streaking the public way, as down they pass,
With a long, living, line of lovely light?
Speak, friends, that I may know you!

NURSE.

We are come

On errand from the city, and entreat,
That thou wouldst push aside the bars of brass
That cross thy gates, and open unto us
Free way to Mizpeh's mountains.

WATCHMAN.

The day-star

As yet hath hardly clomb the lowest step
Of Heav'n's steep ladder, and the city-gate,
At this star-lighted hour, doth hesitate
To troul upon his hinges.

NURSE.

Not of us

Be thou distrustful, watchman!—we are bent
 To seek the mountains at this dewy hour,
 To see the morning-sun up-shoot his horns
 From Midian's eastern wilderness, to mark
 The family of stars die out of Heaven,
 To spy th' illumination of the world
 Before th' Almighty's servant, him who walks
 With steps of glory round the universe.
 T' inbreathe the mountain-fragrance, and to sing
 Our choral song to Heaven—Not, then, of us
 Be thou distrustful, Watchman! Open thou
 To us thy gates!

WATCHMAN. (*Descends and opens the gate..*)

Daughters of song! I ope
 To you the gates; pass through, ye sister-songsters!
 Behold, the stars invite you; yonder East,
 Where Heav'n is knit to Earth, begins to gleam
 With day's young light;—Lo! Heav'n and Earth
 invite you!
 Go, get ye to the mountains, then, of myrrh;
 Ascend, ye fair! the hills of frankincense!

SCENE III.

The Mountains of Gilead.

ZEBAH, AND THE CHOIR OF DAMSELS.

The First Song.

1. (*All.*)

Behold ! the morning, in its spread,
Makes Hermon's dewy summits red ;
The vales, that sleep below in mist,
Are by the rising radiance kiss'd ;
I see them, mountain, valley, flood,
Rejoicing in the light of God !

2. (*ZEBAH alone.*)

Fields, forests, mountains, valleys, ring
With joy, and loud their anthem sing ;
But I, that wander all-forlorn,
Take up my weeping here, and mourn ;
I mourn my parents, and their state
Of hope now reft, and desolate !

3. (THE CHOIR.)

O happy hero, had thy tongue
Been prudent, as thy heart was strong !
O hapless hero ! hopeless now,
And childless render'd by thy vow !
A word thy greatness low hath laid ;
And dreary-waste thy dwelling made.

4. (ZEBAH *alone.*)

In hope my father forth did go,
To conquer Israel's plundering foe ;
Without a hope, though rich in fame,
Back to his house, the hero came ;
His house's hope, his house's stay,
He vow'd unto his God away !

5. (*All.*)

Mountains of Gilead ! loud resound
From cliff to cliff our sorrows round ;
Respond, O Bashan's every vale,
In echoes to our woeful wail ;
Fountains, and forests, join our grief,
For Mizpeh's maid, and Gilead's chief !

SCENE IV.

Another part of the Mountains of Gilead.

The Second Song.

1. (All.)

A many-marching troop we be,
Of melancholy minstrelsy ;
Now up the mountains wend we slow,
Now down into the valleys go ;
From height to hollow, den to dale,
We wend and wander in our wail !

2.

The grottoes in the mountains steep
Are the night-chambers where we sleep ;
The pine-trees shade at noon we make
The couch where cool repose we take ;
Around the founts we build our bowers,
To save us from the mountain-showers.

3.

As round we range in mournful mood,
The mountain-berries are our food ;
We pluck the fruitage fresh and free,
From the wild fig and olive-tree ;
And, from the rill that trickles near,
We drink the waters sweet and clear.

4. (CHOIR OF DAMSELS.)

Like doves of the far valleys, we
Upon the dewy mountains be ;
Each of us mourning her we love,
Our sister, sweetest turtle-dove ;
Each of us mourning, long and loud,
Him, who so fatally hath vow'd !

5. (ZEBAH *alone.*)

In hope my father forth did go,
To conquer Israel's plundering foe ;
Without a hope, though rich in fame,
Back to his house the hero came ;
His house's hope, his house's stay,
He vow'd unto his God away !

6. (All.)

Mountains of Gilead ! loud resound
From cliff to cliff our sorrows round ;
Respond, O Bashan's every vale !
In echoes to our woeful wail ;
Fountains, and forests ! join our grief,
For Mizpeh's maid, and Gilead's chief !

SCENE V.

Grove in the Mountains of Gilead.

The Third Song.

CHOIR OF DAMSELS.

1.

As shoots the citron, blossom-crown'd,
The fairest tree in forest-ground,
So Mizpeh's maid, to every view,
The blossom of our city grew ;
Her mother saw with gladden'd eyes,
Her shape of comely beauty rise.

2.

Her father's heart joy'd secretly
Her sweet unfolding bloom to see,
His only plant, he saw her shoot,
With promise and rich hope of fruit ;
He forward look'd to years, when bliss
From children's children should be his !

3.

Alas! these golden hopes are shorn ;
The tree of promise up is torn ;
His house, with shouts of joy that rang,
Now suffers under sorrow's pang ;
Toss'd on her couch, the mother weeps,
The father gloomy silence keeps.

4. (ZEBAH *alone.*)

In hope my father forth did go,
To conquer Israel's plundering foe ;
Without a hope, though rich in fame,
Back to his house the hero came ;
His house's hope, his house's stay,
He vow'd unto his God away !

5. (All.)

Mountains of Gilead ! loud resound
From cliff to cliff our sorrows round ;
Respond, O Bashan's every vale !
In echoes to our woeful wail ;
Fountains, and forests ! join our grief,
For Mizpeh's maid, and Gilead's chief !

ACT V. SCENE I.

The Northern Gate of Mizpeh.

WATCHMAN, NURSE, ZEBAH, AND CHOIR.

WATCHMAN. What train be these, in damsel-
raiments dress'd,
With long, green branches in their hands, seen waving
In the clear moonshine, hitherward that come
Down the steep northern road that slopeth up
To Gilead's mountain ? Speak, night-wandering train !
That I may know you !

NURSE. Watchman, on thy tower
That standest all night long to keep the city !

Descend thou, and unbolt thy guarded gates,
That we may enter.

WATCHMAN. The wayfaring men,
Familiar to the desert, that all day
Have jaded out their journey to the sun,
Already have pass'd through—the vintager
And labour-weary'd hind, now cabin'd sit
Within their reed-roof'd houses—all that seek
The city, or for safety, or for rest,
Are enter'd ;—who, then, ye, O damsel-train !
So tardy, that have over-timed the hour
That shuts the city-portals ?

NURSE. We are come
Down from the mountains, where, a season, we
Have been with thoughtful footsteps wandering,
Singing upon their summits, and within
Their greenwood hollows, both to heav'n and earth,
Our plaintive song, expressive of the theme
That burdens our sad hearts.

WATCHMAN. The moon hangs high ;
And the rich dew falls heavily ;—this hour
Is late for the wayfarer.

NURSE. We have chosen
This hour, the bright, the quiet, and the cool,
When the throng'd city-gates have ceas'd their noise

Of thoroughfare and business, to pass in
Silent and unregarded ;—open, then,
To us, O watcher ! that again we may
Be greeted in our houses.

WATCHMAN. (*Opens the gate.*) Enter in
Ye minstrels of the mountains ! that have been
Singing your songs of lamentation
To heaven, and earth, expressive of the theme
That burdens your sad hearts ;—Enter, and greet !
Your friends, and be ye greeted in your houses !

SCENE II.

Chamber.

ZEBAH. (*Alone.*)

ZEBAH. After a sweet short slumber, I awake :—
The sun yet keeps his eastern cave, but Night
Is nearing to the world's great western gate
Through which she seeks the sea ;—It is the hour
When the hir'd labourer doth unfold his hands
For yet one slumber ; whilst the virtuous matron,

Girding her loins with strength, dispenses food,
By her lamp's early light, unto her household,
And portions out the day-tasks to her maidens ;—
It is the hour, too, when the watchful sage,
In love with wisdom, courts her by the light
Of the Day-star, his lamp, whose brighter beam,
Amid a field of lustres numberless,
Directs him to his Maker ;—fittest hour
For meditation, and soul-arming thought
Against Time's various stirring incidents,
Toils, trials, duties, of th' approaching day.—
O thou, my soul ! thou hast to-day thy toils,
To-day thy last great duties, and thy trials ;
Be not disquieted ; encounter them ;
Enwrap thee in thy conscious virtue ; make
Thy stay, thine own nobility of purpose !
Be Heaven thy hope, when thou quit'st hold of Earth ;
Be God thy comforter, in th' arms of Death !
The day that dawns shall be thy day of glory ;
A day not unrenown'd to Jacob's sons ;
In future times, the daughters of our land,
On mountains, and in valleys, in their songs
Shall of thy name make honourable mention,
As one, that, with her short, frail life, did buy
Her country's and her father's lasting triumph.

O arm thee, then, my soul, to take thy last
Farewell of all this world!—fair though it be,
'Tis but an out-field of God's bright creation;
A better world awaits thee;—Fear thou not,
Towards that much-fairer land, th' Almighty's home,
To wing thy flesh-uncumber'd, happy way;
Happy the more from being premature;—
Too soon we cannot be unclogg'd of earth,
And taste eternal joys!—But soft—I hear
The sound of gentle footstep—'tis the tread
Of one—my trusty servant—whom I bade
Attend my chamber, at this early hour,
For my behests—'tis she— (*Servant enters*)

The peace of heaven

Be with thee, faithful one! Thou timest well
The over-night's appointment.

SERVANT. May the grace
And blessing from on high abide with thee,
Thou daughter of my lord ! I stand before thee
Submissive to thine orders.

ZEBAH. In apt hour
Thou comest ;—Yet is heard the din of men
In Mizpeh's streets ?

SERVANT. Deep silence sitteth yet
On Mizpeh's house-roofs, and within her streets ;

The mill-stone sleepeth idle on the hearth
Unwhirl'd, nor utters yet his lively sound ;
The grinder's morning-song is yet unsung ;
And not a creaking hinge is heard to move,
Letting day-labourer forth.

ZEBAH.

'Tis a meet time

For wafting forth such messages as mine ;
Go then, thou faithful bosom ! unto whom
I thus entrust my secretest resolves ;
Steal, in thy veil, forth from my father's house,
And, passing thorough Mizpeh's silent streets,
Seek thou the habitation of the priest,
Where, lone and over-arch'd by branching trees,
It stands beside the city-wall :—Address
To him the words wherewith I charge thine ear ;
Bid him put on his breast-plate, and his robes
For beauty and for glory eminent,
For this good day requires his ministry ;
Bid him prepare his altar, and with it
The sacrificial fire, and implements
Subservient to the work of sacrifice ;
Have them all forth, and ready by the time
The sun at highest rides ;—for, at that hour,
The victim, in her robes and fillets dress'd,
Shall stand at th' altar by his side, prepar'd,

The just and willing offering due to Heaven !
Go then, O dear and faithful heart ! bear thou
These my commands in secrecy, and seal'd
Ev'n from the people of my father's house ;
Nor let thy footsteps tremble, or be backward
In this thy trusted mission.

SERVANT.

Ah, sad errand !

My fearful feet, indeed do hesitate ;
And yet, my duteous heart, engaged to thee,
O daughter, urgeth me to its fulfilment.
Farewell !]

SCENE III.

Chamber.

JEPHTHAH, SHOLMI.

JEPHTHAH. Man of my peace ! thou who hast
 shar'd my joys,
And tasted of my griefs, support me now
In my extremest sorrows :—I have stood
With thee in battle's terriblest assaults,
Unshaken, though the arrow and the spear
Were levell'd at my bosom ; but the griefs

Of this impending conflict weigh me down,
And make me roll in ashes.

SHOLMI.

Would to God

I had a balm for such soul-piercing wounds !
I look around me wide for remedy,
In vain ;—I cast about for some device,
In vain ;—some scheme to free thee from the net
Of misery, self-wrought, self-spread, wherein
Thy momentary speech hath tangled thee !

JEPHTHAH. 'Tis fix'd my friend !—Cruel Necessity
Hath shut us in, within her iron arms ;
Alas ! my faith stands sponsor for the issue ;
The law with peremptory tone exacts ;
The priest unwillingly, with trembling lips,
Expounds the altar's claims ; and Mizpeh's people,
Deeply commov'd 'tween a religious sense
Of th' obligation of that awful vow,
And pity for th' event that needs must follow
As its completion, stand perplex'd, confus'd,
Anxious, yet fearful for the deathful close.
No light—no hope—no possibility
Appears of an escape ;—Religion, Law,
And Honour, all conclude,—My Child must die !

SHOLMI. O word of horrid utt'rance—name it
not !

JEPHTHAH. Heav'n is imperious—Would to God

I too

Could name it not—could never think of it,
But as a thing impossible, too dire
For a dear father's acting !

SHOLMI.

Yet, methinks,

Yet, yet, perhaps (would we could compass it !)
The deed of blood, the last, the frightful act,
Of impious law-requirement, may by thee
Be blamelessly forborne.

JEPHTHAH.

Alas ! my friend,

Heav'n, human virtue, faith, lift up the voice
Against the non-fulfilment.

SHOLMI.

Let us strain

That virtue to the very farthest verge,
Ev'n overpass the strictness of it's limit,
That such an act, to virtue so abhorrent,
'Gainst which the voice of Nature is so mutinous,
May, in its homicidal, black performance,
Be, happily, if but in any wise,
Made by prevention void :—Thy daughter walks
A mourner on the mountains ;—Let her there
Tarry, a stranger to her father's city,
A stranger to the valleys—there unseen,
Obscure, unsought, and undiscoverable,

Arrang'd the fatal doings of to-day ;
Ere break of morn the priest had been appris'd
Of her resolve, and order'd to prepare
His altar, with its fires and implements,
For her forthcoming at the hour of noon ;
When, with her father to surrender her,
She should appear, and give her life away,
Before the eyes of her assembled country,
As to her country sold and stipulated.
These are my daughter's doings and designs,
Now to her father, and her father's house
Imparted, as determinate and fix'd
Beyond recall—a covenant compact
'Tween her and Mizpeh's altar.

SHOLMI.

Woe the while !

Alike we mourn the sorrow-charg'd result
Of that resolve, as we admire and laud
The magnanimity from whence it springs !

JEPHTHAH. Thus hath she all dispos'd, with placid
care,

And unconcern'd, as if she were not doom'd
To be the chief transactor in the scene.

But, in degree as she is undisturb'd,
So is her hapless mother agitated,—

So is her hapless father's bosom rack'd
With double pain, as being both the cause
Of all this boundless family-suffering,
And fellow-suff'rer, too, from loss of her.
Now, as her self-appointed hour rolls on,
As the sun mounts, ascending tow'rds the point
Of fatal consummation, so ascends
A father's deep distress and strife of soul,
On one side drawn by Nature's sweetest cords
Tow'rds his beloved offspring, on another
Dragg'd back, and tortur'd by the iron grasp
Of an opinion-sprung, yet tyrant, power,
'Gainst Nature cruel and implacable.
Assist me, then, my friend!—Amidst this sea
Of suffering, let at least the willing hand
Of thy condoling friendship under me
Be flung, to bear my spirit up, whenas
Their former props of consolation fail.
In vain I look to Heaven ; Heaven seems to frown
In wrath upon me, even when, to fulfil
To the least scruple my vow-sanction'd debt,
I overstrain our weak humanity,
And outrage Nature to appease the Law.
In my own heart in vain I seek relief,

For there, from thought to thought repell'd and toss'd,
A double torment haunts my restless soul.
Oh, pity me, my friend!—'Tis terrible—
This tumult of the spirit, this wild agony;—
Methinks the day-light darkens in mine eyes,
Before my grief, and, as the bright hours mount,
Their glory blackens!

*[A sound of harps and voices heard
from below.]*

Hark! again I hear
The clang of harps—'Tis of the virgin-choir,
Mustering to meet my daughter in the court—
The last, sad, meeting!—let us hence, my friend—
And join below the mourning minstrel-train,—
Sad mourners also we!—

SCENE IV.

*The Court in the middle or enclosed part of
Jephthah's House.*

TIRZAH, ZEBAH, JEPHTAH, SHOLMI, NURSE, CHOIR
OF DAMSELS.

TIRZAH (*entering, supported by her damsels.*)

(*To the Damsels.*)

Sustain me, my dear maidens ! aid my steps

A little onward to the olive-tree !—

(*To her daughter.*) O daughter ! from my chamber,
at the call

Of thine entreaty, and th' inviting chime

Of these thy minstrels' many-quiring harps,

I come—with heavy heart—to see thy face,

And hear again thy sweetly-warbling tongue,

Beneath the olive planted by thy sires,

To screen their children's children in its shade—

I come—but, ah !—why see I thy fair form

So chang'd, thy custom'd garments laid aside ?

What mean these ominous habiliments

New to mine eye and strange, this head-attire
Of fillets compassing thy beauteous brows,
This suit of dire apparel?—Oh! too plain
Methinks they speak—thou needest not to tell
Thy mother, who hath dress'd her daughter thus,
Or what the fearful import of this change!
I see, I see the issue!

ZEBAH.

Grieve thou not,
O mother! nor misdeem thou in thy grief!
These be the marriage-garments, wherein I
To-day, before the face of Israel,
Shall marry'd be to glory!

TIRZAH. Ah ! that thought
Too, too divinely for thy mother's peace
Enraptures thee, my child !—'Gainst such unblest
Espousals, doth thy mother with these sobs
Make loud reclaim, nor ever shall her hand
Give thee away, though willing of thyself,
Into a glory so obnoxious :
Oh ! canst thou part from me, my dearest child ?
Oh ! can thy father, he who gave thee life,
He, whose imprudent and o'erhasty lip
Hath, without reason, without cause, drawn down
All this tremendous ruin on our house,
Can he abet these doings, or applaud

This thy resolv'd devotedness?—Can he,
Guard of thy life, escort thee to the death,
Bestow thee, in thy guiltlessness, into
Spousals so full of guilt, and so abhorr'd?
Oh! can he tear thee from thy mother's arms
For ever?

JEPHTHAH. Spare, O consort! spare these shafts
Of too just crimination:—this vex'd heart
Too much already has begnaw'd itself,
To merit such dire rackings from without.
Leave, leave my bosom to its torturing self;
Sufficient for my fault its own remorse.

TIRZAH. Thou feel'st but as a father—were thy
love

Keen as a mother's—her's who, on her breast,
Bore the dear child, a portion of herself,
And fashion'd forth of her own blood and substance,
Thou would'st not thus, with dull indifference,
O'erlook'd her separation—seen her led
Ev'n from the shadow of thy father's olive,
Where thou a child wert wont to play in safety—
Led by her father to the hideous place,
Call'd by herself of glory, but by me,
Her mother, call'd a daughter's murd'ring-place!
Oh, no! she shall not—Is she not my child?

Did not my womb conceive her? Lay she not
 A suckling in my bosom?—Thine alone
 She is not—she is mine, her mother's too—
 Ask her of me—beseech me to give up
 The dear, dear treasure of which half is mine—
 Beseech my heart for her destruction—beg
 The daughter's life, an only daughter's life,
 From her much-loving mother!

JEPHTHAH. O that Heaven
 Had shut mine ears up in eternal silence,
 Ere through their portals such afflicting words
 Had pass'd unto my heart!—Be merciful
 To me, my consort! 'Tis not I that ask
 Thy daughter from thy side—'Tis Faith, 'tis Justice,
 'Tis Israel's expectation, it is Heaven—

TIRZAH. Cover not, husband, with such hallow'd
 words
 A deed, the huge enormity of which
 Faith, Justice, Heaven, repudiate—God's bright sun
 Will not shine out upon it!
 Oh! 'tis thou—
 Thou art the cause—thine oath—(Heaven frown not
 on me
 For this large freedom of my lip)—thine oath,
 That wicked, most unwise, child-killing oath!—

—Bear me, my maidens!—

Uphold my tottering frame, till I do speak

A mother's mind, and utter it thus loud

Into the ears of all my husband's household,

To this bright Sun, to Israel, to Heaven,

That, in the name of Mercy, Nature, Love,

A mother's love, I do disclaim these doings :

Reject, and fling from me, with due abhorrence

This unpaternal, impious, sacrifice,

This, this, my husband's blood-burnt-offering !

So may my God, my comforter, regard me !

JEPHTHAH. And I—most wretched father ! may
my God

Admit me too into his consolations !

I that do need them most, as most the cause.—

Uphold me, O my friend ! (*To SHOLMI*)—let thy
kind arm

Prop me amid this anguish.

ZEBAH. (*Addressing her Mother.*) Spare, O
mother !

I do conjure thee, by a daughter's love,

If I was ever dear to thee, if now

Most dear and most admitted to thy heart,

As being soon to pass and travel hence,—

Have mercy on a father's broken heart,

(Already full, and crowded with its trouble!)

As thou would'st wish to see me ever happy,

Speak thou not that which can alone disturb

That happiness with dread of your disunion !

O break not up, with soul-exciting words

That peace, that blissful calmness, into which

Th' Almighty God hath settled my glad soul,

And let our parting be an hour of Love !

(*To her Father.*) Be thou consol'd, O Father !—'tis
not thou,

It is Religion, Faith—'tis I myself,

'Tis my own love of country, and of Truth,

That bear me forth, triumphant, clad in glory,

Of which these altar-vestments are the type,

Forth to my stage, the high-place of my triumph,

Where this mortality shall fall, but where

My spirit, th' immortality, emerg'd

From its engrossing cover, shall ascend

Up on it's altar-flame to God and Heaven !

One thing I wish, ere I relinquish earth,

One charge I as my last commit to you,

Which, as ye love me, care not to pass by—

O father ! be my mother dear to thee,

Aye dear, as in my early childhood-days ;

Because she lov'd her daughter, cherish her,

That, in her husband's strong affection,
 She may find solace, from her daughter's loss :
(To her Mother.) O mother ! be my father dear to
 thee,

Still dear, as when the husband of thy youth !
 He lov'd his daughter much, and for that love,
 He gave her to be greatly glorified,
 Set her on high, his country's triumph-price :—
 And, when the thought of me in after-times
 Comes o'er your souls, think not of me as perish'd,
 Departed, lost, unto my father's house ;
 Believe me ever present, count on me
 In chamber, and in field, as your companion,
 Your bosom-comforter and secret friend ;
 Nor say, *Our daughter thus hath dy'd*—but say,
Our daughter lives eternally ; she hath
Before us mounted to th' Almighty's palace ;
T' enjoy her jubilee of bliss and glory !

SHOLMI. *(Aside.)* O happy parents ! to have such
 a child !

Hapless, oh hapless ! to be reft of such !

*[A sound of trumpets is heard
 from without.]*

ZEBAH. Hark ! 'tis the trumpet sounds !

I know its speech,—it bids me hie away—

It says, the hour is come, when gather'd Israel
Stands ready waiting for the sacrifice ;
I come, I come—O mother ! may our God
Apply the balm of solace to thy heart !—
Stay, stay these tears—yet let me hear thy voice,
In one farewell, one kind eternal blessing—
One dear and last salute. (*Kisses her.*)

TIRZAH. O my daughter !—
—Thou goest—Shall thy mother stay behind ?—
Let me attend thee to the fatal steps,
And see thee to the last.

ZEBAH. Too heavy, heavy,
My mother, is the burden of thy heart,
For this thy deem'd sweet-duty ;—with my sisters
Remain thou here ;—my father and his friend
Shall walk as mine attendants.

TIRZAH. Wilt thou part
From me forever ?—O thou dearest child !
For ever part ?

ZEBAH. Heaven and my heart, O mother !
Command me to depart.

TIRZAH. Oh, sad departure !
Most bitter separation !

ZEBAH. Weep not, mother,
Heaven wills it to be so !

TIRZAH.

Alas ! alas !

Most cruel, so—and to a mother's ear

Most bitter in its speaking—

Oh ! may God,

Out of his own high heaven, look down upon thee,

And bless thee, O my child !—

Ah me ! thou carry'st with thee, from this house

Of tears, a mother's tenderest love and blessing ;

Once more thou dearest !

*[She kisses her, then sinks down, and
is borne up by her damsels.*

ZEBAH.

Heaven's holy peace sustain

Thy sinking heart, O mother !

(To the Choir.) Ye sisters of my soul !

(To the Nurse.) Thou faithful dame !

[Kisses them.

Take this last earnest of a loving heart—

Farewell !

Let us depart, O father !

*[She takes her father's arm, and retires
with him and SHOLMI.*

THE CHOIR, (*Sing, with their harps.*)

1.

She's gone—our sister soft and dear,
The maid high-minded, void of fear !
Whilst every eye around her grieves,
And every breast with sorrow heaves,
Sublimely tranquil, forth she moves,
Follow'd by all our tender loves !

2.

My harp ! my harp ! Oh, feebly thou
Dost answer to my feelings now ;
Thy strings, all-wet with eyelid's dew,
Their wonted symphony refuse ;
My voice—it trembles as I sing,—
My fingers, as they strike the string !

3.

O how can I refrain the tear
For her I lov'd so sweet and dear ?
With whom, in sunny childhood's day,
I went on Jabbok's banks to play ;
With whom, on Mizpeh's mountain's high,
I wander'd, singing mournfully !

4.

O mother of the noble maid !
How may thy sorrows be allay'd ?
I weep unmeasur'd—how may I
Bid thee from weeping stay thine eye ?
Alas ! no check such sorrows know ;
Flow then, my tears, in fullness flow !

SCENE V.

*The Street in Mizpeh along which the train
is passing.*

HEBREW PROPHET.

(The PROPHET advances to meet the train.)

O daughter of my prince ! I grieve for thee ;
All night I have been weeping—on my couch
Sleepless, and spirit-sunk, from thought of thee !
Yet—now—a change descends upon my mood—
Marvel and Reverence seize upon my soul !
When I behold thine innocence, thy youth,
Thy beauty eminent o'er Gilead's maids,

Thy filial love, thy sweet simplicity,
Thy firm devotedness, and height of soul,
How may I not, amid my flood of tears,
Be struck with admiration, and with love !
Thou, honour to the dames of Israel !
Thou, pride and ornament of Gilead's land !
Thou, lasting jewel of thy father's house !
Now, with thy life, about to satisfy
Thy country's honour, and thy father's debt !
O thou Serene ! that, with triumphant mien,
Walk'st onward to the pyre—Oh ! go not on—
Go not—'tis full of pity and of horror—
Doth my tongue err ? Is it my too-much love,
That makes it reel and stumble in it's talk ?
Go, go, thou maid magnanimous ! fulfil
Thy soul's great purpose—walking hand in hand
With thy belov'd, most melancholy, father,
Precede in the procession of thy triumph,
Ascend to Heaven—Go, go, to God and Glory !
Lo ! gather'd Israel compasseth thee round
With sweet Compassion, Awe, and silent Love !
Nor only these—in future times, thy name
By Mizpeh's maids in chambers shall be hymn'd,
And Gilead's mountains shall ring loud with it ;
Israel's wide land shall not contain thy glory ;

The sea thy fame shall overpass ; the isles
Of Chittim and the regions yet unknown
Of farthest west, with honour shall receive it ;
Men, yet unborn shall take into their lips
Thy name with celebration, and in tears,
Like me, shall of thee sing their song of praise !
Go then, high-minded damsel ! go to Glory

SCENE VI.

Court of Jephthah's House.

MESSENGER, TIRZAH, NURSE, CHOIR.

MESSENGER. In sorrow I approach this house of
tears,
Intruding, yet with awe and deep condolence,
Upon a mother's grief.

TIRZAH. O Israelite !
Thy tears—thy garments rent—that staining dust—
Speak thy pain'd heart :—Bear'st thou a farther load
Of grief, to us already overheapt
With measureless affliction ?

MESS. By command
Of Mizpeh's priest, I come to Jephthah's house,
There to relate, though with yet-trembling lip,
What my tear-flooded eyes have just beheld—
A sight, though pitiful and full of woe,
Yet radiant with sublimity—at which
Assembled Israel, in their gaze, stood struck
With admiration and astonishment !

TIRZAH. Speak forth to me, O messenger ! thy
tale ;
Already charg'd with heaviest dole, my heart
Can feel no more accession of distress,
How terrible so'er the purport be
Of thy distressful, dire intelligence.

MESS. O thou bereav'd of one, that, when on earth,
Shone out an ornament to Israel,
And now hath ris'n, on heav'nward-pointed flame,
Up to her proper dwelling in the skies !
Mother of her, for whom this heart yet throbs
With pity, these sad eyes yet swim in tears,
How shall I make recital unto thee,
Of that which, howsoe'er anticipated,
Must, in the doing, yet affect thy heart !
Yet be not, child-lorn mother ! overborne
With grief, that boots not ;—God, in recompense,

Hath mix'd up kindness with thy suffering,
And made thee, to thy people, venerable,
A mother, and an honour to our land !
O hear thou, then, though sorrowful, the tale
Of thy dear daughter's death-procession.

TIRZAH. Though ghastly be the tale, it doth
concern me—

Relate the closing-scene of our distress.

MESS. Forth from her father's gate, thy daughter
came

Beaming with beauty, and complacency,
Amid the people congregated round,
Eager, though deeply struck with awe and sorrow,
To see the victim of her father's vow :
Grief seem'd to touch her cheek, when she o'erpass'd
Her father's threshold ; a few glancing tears,
In memory of her childhood-happiness,
Like gems of dew, came trickling from her eyes ;—
That dear, sweet, pang was soon allay'd ; and she,
With soul angelically calm, and countenance
Erect, commanding love and admiration,
Pass'd on in her sublimity ; her father
Downcast, dejected, scarcely conscious,
Dragg'd, tardily, and with difficulty, his steps,
As by her side he wept ; his daughter's arm

Sustain'd him in his walk :—As when the star
Of Morning, up the causeway of the East,
(Soon to be quench'd in Day's arriv'ng flood)
Walks in her ocean-wash'd and burnish'd brightness,
Receiving, in her heav'nly motions, blessings
From Araby's glad shepherds—so the maid
(Whose light was soon to be extinguish'd) pass'd
In silence on, saluted by the hearts
Of Israel's tens of thousands ;—most stood mute
As if in veneration ; some aloud
Met her with songs, and, in their acclamations,
Show'r'd from their tongues rich benedictions on her :
Meanwhile, between her father and his friend,
This on the left, her father on the right,
Graceful she mov'd toward the appointed place,
The altar of her sacrifice, whereon,
High and expos'd afar to view, the priest
Stood in his long, white, linen, stole array'd ;
The crackling fire burn'd brightly at his side ;—
She reach'd the altar's steps ; and, having kiss'd
Her father, and receiv'd his parting blessing,
(Scarce given through floods of weeping,) she, with
step
Untottering, mounted calmly to the place,
The platform of her death and of her glory.

Whereat the men of Israel, now beholding,
As stag'd for th' admiration of the world,
Her youth, her beauty, and her dignity,
Hush'd as the grave, their murmur ; Silence chain'd
Their tongues ; Suspense, Attention, Pity, Love,
Held fix'd their eyes, astonied held their hearts ;—
At the priest's side she took her station ;—then,
With eyes advanc'd to heaven, and lips ejaculating
Prayers for her father, mother, friends, and country,
Stood, waiting from the priest the fatal stroke ;
His hand, unwillingly compliant, shook
And falter'd in its task ; thrice he essay'd,
And thrice was disappointed in the gripe ;
She with a smile look'd down, and seem'd to chide
The trepidation of his quiv'ring hand ;
At last he rear'd the weapon, and, with head
Averted, shudd'ring at his own forc'd act,
He struck—he struck—
Into her angel-heart !

TIRZAH. Merciful God ! my daughter !

CHOIR. Alas ! our gentle sister !

MESSENGER. O Israel ! O my country ! O my
God !

Then, then, methought the world unto my eyes
Grew dim and dark ; Grief prostrated my soul ;

And downward to the earth weigh'd my sad eye.
Commov'd was Israel's multitude ; th' emotions,
That in their bosoms had been pent a while,
Now impotent, burst violent forth ;—all round,
From every eye gush'd torrent tears ; all round,
Rose the loud sobs of sympathy to heaven :
Pity with Admiration in each breast
Disputed place ; and some cry'd out lamenting,
“ *Ah ! piteous, piteous, day for Israel !*”
Others, aloud, with triumph in their voice,
Shouted afar—

“ *Glory to Israel, and to Jephthah's house !
To Jephthah's house, and Jephthah's daughter,
Glory !*

*Her father conquer'd Israel's enemy ;
The daughter, in her victory, transcends
The father's triumph—Glory ! Glory ! Glory !
Live, Live the memory of Mizpeh's maid !
Perish the enemies of Israel !*”

And, in a transport rapt of gratitude,
They have up-rais'd and cheer'd th' afflicted father ;
And now enround and company him home,
With songs of consolation, and with hymns
Congratulant, and gently-ringing harps,
Cymbals, and pipes melodious, whilst their hands

Bear branches of the palm, and other boughs
Of goodly trees, which, o'er their heads, on high,
Sun-ward they wave—a triumph, such as that
Upon the day when Jephthah home return'd
Victorious o'er the spoil-gorg'd Ammonite!
—Hear, hear, their shouting, as aloud they cry!—

[*Voices from without.*

“Glory to Israel, and to Jephthah's house!
To Jephthah's house, to Jephthah's daughter, Glory!”

TIRZAH. O Messenger! thy melancholy words,
That hath summ'd up with sequel terrible
Our house's loss, yet, yet, so far as such
A woe can soften'd be by circumstance,
Carry a little sweetness in their much
Of bitterness:—My country's sympathy!
The consolations of my gracious God!
Sustain my heart in its affliction!

CHOIR.

1.

My sister went—I too would fain
Have gone in her funereal train;
She bade me stay behind—I stay'd
To tend her mother as she bade;

I heard not her last breathed sigh ;
I saw her not as she did die !

2.

Sweet Sister ! thou art pass'd to God ;
His palace now is thine abode ;
While we, thy life's companions dear,
Are left to weep and linger here ;
Thy place is empty ; how may we
Henceforth be joyous, rest of thee ?

3.

How shall we now the song advance ?
How weave the many-mazed dance ?
With whom walk now beside the rills,
Or wander high among the hills ?
She, she is gone, that with her grace,
And goodness, beautified each place !

4.

O sooner shall the Jordan's wave
Stream backward to his fountain-cave ;
Sooner the heavens shall eastward roll
Their stars, and reel, unfix'd, the pole ;

Than from my mournful soul shall fade
The fame of Mizpeh's minstrel-maid !

5.

Hills of Manasseh ! shout her name ;
Valleys of Gad ! repeat the same ;
On Jordan's either palm-clad strand,
In Judah's, and in Ephraim's land,
Let Israel's gratitude proclaim
The glory of our sister's fame !

END OF JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER.

ESTHER;

OR

THE FALL OF HAMAN:

A DRAMATIC POEM.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ANGEL OF RETRIBUTION.

AHASUERUS (Achshirash), King of Persia.

ESTHER (Hadassa), his Queen.

HAMAN, an Amalekite or Agagite, his Prime Minister.

ZERESH, Wife of Haman.

MORDECAI, a Hebrew.

HATACH, Esther's Chamberlain,—a Hebrew, intermediary between Mordecai and the Queen.

HARBONAH, King's Chamberlain.

ZETHAN, the King's Secretary and Reader.

CHOLTAH, a Hebrewess, Handmaid and confidante of the Queen.

HEBREWS,—Chief of the Synagogue, Men, Women, &c.

PERSIAN Water-Carrier.

PERSIAN Potter.

ARTIFICERS.

ECHO OR BATH-KOL (Daughter of Sound or Thunder).

The Scene lies in Shushan, the Capital of the Persian Empire, where the events take place, whether in the Palace or its precincts, the Streets of the City, the Jewish Synagogue, &c. The duration may be considered as being two or more days.

ESTHER.



ACT I. SCENE I.

Shushan.

ANGEL OF RETRIBUTION.

I COME, at God's command—here, on this scene
Of aye-revolving, ever-changeeful earth,
To do the deed which God hath set me to,
His minister, more prompt than flaming fire.
For, in this city, Shushan, where, high-thron'd
Th' imperial Persian sits, and, from his mouth
Issues the breath, that, or with life or death
Affects a thousand cities—In this Shushan,
This, surnam'd of the lily, gay, metropolis,
A bloody plot hath been conceiv'd, and now
Is ripe, even to fulfilment :—One bad heart,
By pride, and spite, and envy, gnaw'd upon,

Is father to the black, blood-pregnant scheme—
Haman, of Esau's seed, the Agagite,
Hereditary hater of the race
Of him, who did his red-haired brother baulk
Of the dear birthright, sold so very cheap.
This man, transplanted from Euphrates' banks,
Where, erst he fed his numerous flocks, hath been
For service to the empire, here advanced,
Hath now his golden Mithras-blazon'd chair
Set high, o'ertopping it o'er all the rest,
Beside the judgment-dealing palace-gate,
Where Elam's high-sock'd princes congregate.
Proud is his port, and haughtily he wears
His head, as nearest to the sun, and thence
Commanding bended knees, gifts, rev'rences,
From the great common crowd of courtiers ;
Yet, in his exaltation, and his pomp
Of homages, from judges, magistrates,
Lieutenants, captains, princes, governors,
Sheriffs, and treasurers, and counsellors,
The flower of this prime kingdom,—one non-homage,
One small neglect—one stiff, uncringing knee,
Hath dash'd his glutt'd soul with discontent,
Shut out self-gratulation, and let in
Confusion, fury, and self-torturing hate.

Hating the man that bows not, he has doom'd
To death, not him alone, the recusant,
But all the people of this non-complyer,
The sons of Jacob, exiles innocent,
Scatter'd, and sunder'd from their Holy Mountain,
Sad sojourners in Persia's provinces,
A small Jehovah-fearing folk, amid
A mighty nation of fire-worshippers.
And now the warrants of the massacre
Are written out all fair ; and rapid posts,
With up-tuck'd garments, riders on swift steeds,
Mules, camels, and young dromedaries, stand
At every palace-port, equipt for travel,
Waiting the sign to start ;—all, all is ready,
Nought wanting, save the royal ring apply'd
To seal the written death just fledg'd for flight ;
And, for the sealing, is this hour appointed.—
Yet, let the monarch seal, let th' Agagite
Hatch and o'erbrood his murderous machinations,—
Let the wing'd shaft stand burning for its flight,
And Death extend his bare hand for the gripe,—
Here I am come from God to stop it all,—
To clog the wheels, whereon this ruin rushes,—
(As, in the Red Sea's strait, I did confound
And strike off Pharaoh's impious chariot-wheels)—

To interpose the arm that guards the good
From unjust persecution, and roll back
Th' intended evil on th' intender's head,
With retribution tenfold aggravated,
Ev'n to the world's amazement.—This my office ;—
And this, the charge by the Most High assign'd me,
To save a guiltless people, and show forth
Example to a doubting world, that God
Rewards a man according to his works,
Has good men in his keeping, nor will suffer
Malice to triumph o'er simplicity,
And cruelty to crush the innocent.—
So shall all good men hope—all bad despair !

SCENE II.

Chamber in Mordecai's house.

MORDECAI, HATACH.

MORDECAI. Be sure, O friend ! there is some
danger toward—
Some mustering mischief—some conspiracy

And not upon my country !

By what signs

Inferrest thou ought evil ?

As the mariner

In to-day's sinister appearances

Accruing from a hundred provinces

Each other, breaking short the sentences

Their backs to those whom they were just addressing,

As if they in a moment had discern'd

Something funereal to themselves or others

Ensuing on their speech :—The palace, too,

Travails with some mysterious, new, state-birth,

Fatal to foreign or to Persian men.—

Of courtiers entering in or going out

The countenances are chang'd :—But chiefly he,

The Am'lekite, the loather of our race,
Bears, in his brows and eyes, gestures and looks,
Too visibly impress'd not to to be read
Ev'n by the child, envenom'd, deadly rancour
Against th' unhappy sons of Israel.

HATACH. There—there—your surmise carries
likelihood ;—

For, if from Ahasuerus' cabinet,
Ill should (as you suspect) o'ertake the Hebrew,
'Tis he, the Hebrew-hater, from the whom,
As fountain-head, that mischief must proceed ;
His spirit there predominates ;—the king,
As table-friend, and boon-companion,
Admits him daily to his banquetings,
At which, in high-flush'd moments, when the soul
Of Xerxes' son veers, like the summer wind,
Around the sky's whole compass, this breed-bate
Takes vantage of the wine-flush, and, with art,
Perverts and warps the monarch's easy mood,
According to his mischievous own nature ;
With the king's name, covering, enforcing, wreaking,
His own malicious, Jew-destroying, schemes.

MORDECAI. Too true—'tis from this friendship,
bred of wine,
I chiefly do derive mine apprehensions ;

This man, this Haman, in whose bosom hate
Holds her vexatious revels, from the day
In which, through God, I sav'd the monarch's life,
Has look'd upon me with invidious scowl,
As on a rival, too much bless'd in having
An honest claim, superior to his own,
Upon the royal favour ; and with this
Personal hate and envy, there is mix'd—
Hate national, the Am'lekites' remembrance
Of the vale Rephidim, where fell their hosts
Beneath the sword of Joshua, near the Altar
Jehovah-nissi, on whose stones was grav'd—
*War, war with Amalek from generation
To generation.* 'Tis this double malice,
This fierce, twin-headed hate, that gnaweth him,
Taints ev'n his eyes with prejudice, and makes
Him misinterpret men's most simple acts,
And attitudes, into contemptuous signs
Admitting no forgiveness. Well I see,
As through the gate he passes every morn,
The deep-laid mischief, meant to Israel,
Flung from his wrathful eyes intelligibly,
As lightning darted from the lurid cloud
Marching along with thunder.

HATACH.

From that spite,

Not to shew forth her birth, until what day
The revelation may be not unseasonable,
But influence for good the Hebrew name
And state:—And now, methinks, that likely day
Is drawing near:—Yet, let us wait, my friend,
Till the time ripen its yet dark events,
To justify and prosper the disclosure.
I shall be watchful of the signs ; do thou,
Between queen Esther and her kinsman go,
As one unknowing of her family,
And be the bond between us.—Till to-morrow—
I to my gate—Thou to thy palace-duties.

SCENE III.

A Room in the Palace.

AHASUERUS, HAMAN (*at the Wine-banquet*).

HAMAN. My lord, O king! it is a perverse
people—

Even from their origin, their father Jacob,—
Whom Isaac lov'd not, but his mother doated on,
And urg'd the dim-ey'd father to the fraud

Whereby poor Esau, cheated of the blessing
 Was banish'd to the desert, there to live
 A prowler, by the sword, and serve his brother.—
 Even from their origin, their foul beginning,
 The people are corrupt ;—Not their own lake
 Of Sodom and Gomorrhah so infects
 The pure-orb'd sun with pestilential taint,
 As do these out-casts our sun-honouring realm
 With their most-loath'd infection !

AHASUERUS. Of what strain
 Be their opinions and their laws ?

HAMAN. Diverse
 From those of other people ; they despise
 The King's commandments, and, when every man
 In every province, from th' Egyptian flood
 Eastward to Ind's long river, bows the head
 Submissive to thy mandates, this stiff race,
 Obdurate as the rocks of that steep mount
 From whence (they say) the Thunderer gave them
 laws,

Stand out rebellious, and gainsay with words,
 Alledging, *God, not Flesh, is their commander,*
Jehovah is their Maker and their Lord ;
While Ahasuerus is but Xerxes' son,
That scatter'd them.

AHASUERUS. Their religious rites,
And tenets—of what character ?

HAMAN. Alike,
Sav'ring of disrespect, disloyalty,
And disbelief—their own is all—ought else
Is nothing, though believ'd by half a world :
They mock the sun when rising ; and, when others
Turn their glad faces to the fresh-gilt East,
Kissing the hand with mouth of adoration,
They flout with blasphemy the glorious light,
And, *Creature not Creator*, cry aloud
Even to the Persian's face, even at the doors
Of Mithras' temple : And, when night's sweet
 queen,

The sister of the day-rejoicing God,
Walks in her brightness, and Susanian dames
Bear forth their little children in their arms
To doors and casements, thence to greet the light
And worship it with welcome, then these dames
Of Jewry hide it from their little ones,
Fly to back-casements, where they skulking sit
With faces turn'd towards Jerusalem,
Giving the fair moon scorn, as being but
An up-lit thing that doth deserve no worship.—
These be their blasphemies ; and then their walk

And conversation is of similar bent ;
Their thoughts tend only to their own behoof ;
Their hands are fangs to clutch huge usury ;
Their tongues, contemptuous, only laud themselves ;
Their feet are prompt to chase each sordid gain ;
In brief, their very garment-hems and sleeves,
Befring'd with parchments and phylacteries,
Do utter treason, and defiance cry
To Persia's King and God.

AHASUERUS.

My father Xerxes—

Shifted he not these folk from Babylon,
Where in brick-kilns they toil'd as brick-makers,
To this our sunny peach-producing land,
Wherein they, like to griffins, scrape up gold,
And guard it in deep holes ?

HAMAN.

He did, my lord !—

Maugre their God, whose emblem is the cherub,
Your sire transplanted them ;—in spite of all
Their boasting, that they are the blest of Heaven,
He hurry'd them unwilling, push'd them off
Hand-manacled, before his chariot-wheels,
And sham'd them of their Glory :—Witness now
This trophy of your triumph now before us,
This golden wine-cup from Jerusalem,
O'er-carv'd with little cherubs, consecrate

Once to their temple, now the pretty gaude
That garnisheth thy banquets ! (*Lifting the cup.*)

AHASUERUS.

By the tombs

Of my forefathers ! 'tis a goodly goblet ;
See how, with mantling, interlaced, wings,
The well-pair'd angels of Jerusalem
Float, in the rare embossment of their gold,
O'er the gemm'd coffer lodg'd beneath !

HAMAN.

It is

A grace to Persia's banquet.

AHASUERUS.

Then, fill it high

With Pasagardian grape-juice, and up-drink
The beverage to the bottom, as the sign
Of exultation o'er the prostrate Jew ;

(*HAMAN fills it and drinks.*)

And fill it too for me, when thou art done,
That I may revel with thee—

(*The King takes the cup from the hand of*

HAMAN, *and drinks.*)

—— Ha !—Our land

Of Persia must be purg'd—the sun no longer
Can brook these weeds of Jewry rankling on 't,
And fattening in that sunshine they abhor.—
Another cup — (*HAMAN fills.*)

And brim it full and high

With Chalybonian !

—— Now—*To Persia's God !*

*And may his worship dominate in th' earth,
As he at mid-day rides upon the sphere !*

(The King drinks, and gives the cup to HAMAN.)

Drink Haman, to the God—Can the grape's blood
Be fitlier used than thus to glorify
Him, by whose beams it is matur'd ? me-seems,
This Syrian-wine from this Jerusalem-cup
Tastes sweet and sweeter.

HAMAN. *(Aside.)* Mantling in the pate
Of royalty, I hope 'twill generate
No good for Jewry.

AHASUERUS. Haman ! hath your mandate,
Ordering the death of these fire-flouting men,
Been seal'd and sent ? and hath the month and day
Been fix'd by the Chaldean's astrolabe,
As fortunate most for the doom'd Jews' misfortune ?

HAMAN. My Lord, here is the death-writ fairly
drawn,

Waiting the impress of the royal ring ;—
Wherewith, by your permission—

AHASUERUS. Stamp it, Haman—
Give it the final pass, to make it roam
All-current, as good coin.

[illegible]

[*He seals the warrant.*]

AÑASUERUS. Now call the Chaldee,
And let him, with his star-pervading glance,
Determine the good time.

HAMAN. My Lord, from month
To month, from day to day, I have been wearing
The stairs o' th' court-astrologer's abode,
Courting his lucky answer ;—I cast Pur,
Before his presence every day at noon,
That stars might ratify what lot cast up ;
But, till to day, it seem'd each planet fought
Fierce against Pur ; and our Chaldean sage,
Star-conversant, forbade the undertaking,
Saying one day, that *Mercury was thwart,*
And on another, now is Mars conjoin'd
With Ophiuchi, an ill-omen'd place
O' th' zodiack, that breeds nought but bate and bane.
But ho ! to-day, at noontide, when I shook
Purim before him, and they pointed out
The thirteenth day of Adar for the work,
Then did our chop-chang'd Chaldee clap his hands,
And cry, *Now Pur with Planet harmonizes,*
Now is the moon in a most lucky house ;

*Now, Venus, Mars, and Jupiter in trine
 Conspire in Heaven most prosp'rously for plots
 Begun on earth ! Now, Haman, to your work !
 The stars are your's—onward with your good stars ;
 Men may be untrue, but the stars are sure !*
 Whereby, my Lord, encouraged, I have brought
 All forward tow'rds completion ; and the posts
 Stand at your palace-gates, accoutred all
 For quick dispatch.

AHASUERUS. Then, let them fly like cranes,
 East, North, South, West—let loose by my com-
 mand :—

They cannot rush too rapid for the work.

HAMAN. My Lord ! not only shall their flight
 be quick,
 Their execution, too, shall be effectual ;—
 They shall empower, excite, exhort thy people,
 To kill, to cause to perish, and destroy,
 All Jews, their children, and their little ones,
 Both young and old, in all the provinces,
 On one same day, upon the thirteenth day
 Of the month Adar—'Tis a day that shall
 Be richly-red with Jew-blood !

AHASUERUS. In the calendar
 Mark'd with a flaming rubrick !—See their spoil

HAMAN.

Honour and joy!—

Daughter of Tatnai! what, and where, are they?

What are a thousand honourers, when one vile

Dishonourer stares me in the face each morn,

Marring the day's whole triumph?—

How I hate him!

This Mordecai, this proud, unfawning Jew,

That stands alone, a pouter with his lip,

Amid a congregation of sweet smilers!

Why—this same morn, when up the palace-court,

The levee-place, where courtiers congregate,

I pass'd, to have a parley with the king,

I saw him standing sullen as of yore,

A pillar of contemptuousness; and when

My train of satraps, chancellors, and scribes,

The Lords of Media and of Bactriana,

Prince Tharubis and noble Ariomard,

Duke Datames and Prince Artembaces

And Arsaces the Duke of Arachosia,

With other noble servants of the king,

Approach'd me, with becoming rev'rences,

As saying, *Thou, O Haman, art our Lord;**We put our necks below thy lordly feet!*

Then this haught Jew did seem to plant himself

Industriously before my very path,

And, as I pass'd, did turn his eye askance,
And crook'd his form to uncouth attitude,
Forsooth, in mockery, as reckoning me
But a poor shadow passing, as a thing
Of less importance than the buzzing fly
That hover'd round his turban :—But, by Mithras !
I have him—

Him, and his total Amalek-hating race,
Proscrib'd, death-doom'd—for this—for these insults
To me, and to my house !

ZERESH. Not less, my Lord,
At home have we been watchful to secure
Revenge for thy spurn'd honours.—In good sooth,
This study'd mock'ry touches our whole house,
And merits, in its turn, an exquisite
And study'd punishment ;—There is preparing,
Here in our dwelling's very heart and centre,
A show-place for our vengeance.—

HAMAN. Thank you, dame !—
Why—'tis most seemly that this mocking Jew,
This joy-dispelling Mordecai, should not
Die darkly by a vulgar Persian poniard,
Like his Jew-brethren, in the gross :—No, no,—
He must be half-rais'd to the heaven for this,
Aye—aggrandiz'd in 's taking off.—Hast thou, then,

O'erseen to-day the work, that yester-eve
 Thou with thy father's brother Arisai,
 Didst recommend?—Yea, marry, I do hear
 The clank of merry hammers in my court!

[*He hears the sound of the workmen.*]

ZERESH. My Lord, the tree is up! Look from the
 window

Down on thy court, and see how diligent
 Thy consort, and her uncle Arisai,
 Have, in thy absence, tended to their task!

HAMAN. (*Looking from the casement.*) A goodly
 gibbet, fair, and high to see!

ZERESH. My Lord! th' artificer declar'd it was
 The stateliest pine that e'er, from Zagra's mount,
 Swum down to Shushan on Choaspes' flood:
 He cull'd it out from all his work-yard store;
 A tree of fifty cubits, that might top it
 Above thy palace-pinnacles.

HAMAN. I like
 Its altitude and fashion well;—the man,
 Fore-doom'd to dangle from it, shall be seen
 From Shushan's every street.—Now let this tree,
 Which is set up so graceful to my mind,
 Be garlanded all gay, its top festoon'd
 With the Spring's prettiest flowers, its every bough,

Trunk, branch, and twig, set round with Shushan's
lilies,

To captivate the eye. Send forth thy maidens
Round, to the meadows, and the river-banks,
To gather pink and primrose for its dress.
So shall this evening see its flowers ; to-morrow
Shall see its fruit dependent.—And, sweet dame,
See thou the carpenter be well rewarded ;
Prepare a dainty banquet in the court
For him and all his craftsmen :—At the foot
Of the tall gibbet let them have their feast,
And drink, till midnight, a prolong'd carousal,
For their good work completed.—Now, my soul
Is somewhat eas'd by this imposing prospect,
Seen from my casement ;—soon our jeering Jew,
Peace-murdering Mordecai, shall handsel it ;
And he that, living, bow'd not, shall in death
Quiver each limb and feature in my honour !

SCENE V.

Interior inclosure, or Court-yard of Haman's Palace.

ARTIFICERS.

1ST ARTIF. Drink to my Lord Duke, Haman !

2D ARTIF. To my lord !

3D ARTIF. The son of Hamdatha, and glory to him,
And to his house !

1ST ARTIF. May all his enemies
Hang as rich apples on this goodly tree !
We sing and drink their dirge, ere yet they're dead.

2D ARTIF. Friends ! we are here face-merry ;
but, I trow,
Some heavy bodement hangs about the heart,
I feel it, dragging us all down to sadness.

3D ARTIF. True, true—'tis but a poor, unseemly
joy,
To quaff thus—'neath a gibbet, howsoe'er
Good be the wine, and generous be the treater.

1ST ARTIF. My heart misgives me—I do bode
some ill—

Little men know who set a gallows up
Who, in their turn, may get the usufruct.

2D ARTIF. Ay, sooth, it is a mad unhallow'd thing
To sit a-drinking here, as now we do,
Under the shadow of a gallows-tree,
As if it were a palm or mulberry ;—
I wonder how we 'greed to 't: Heav'n forgive us!

3D ARTIF. Yon rising moon is ominous—I like not
The ugly halo gathering round her rim!

1ST ARTIF. See'st thou yon owl upon the left-
hand turret?

2D ARTIF. I see an ugly raven on the left.

3D ARTIF. Hark! how the huge, tall gibbet
 creaks! It twang'd
Through all its length a melancholy sound,
As if the ghost of the uprooted tree
Was parting from it.

1ST ARTIF. 'Tis the midnight wind
Whistling amid its tops.

2D ARTIF. A dreary sound
Sings down from Haman's Palace. Things like ghosts
Seem dancing on the pinnacles!

3D ARTIF. The sky
Gathers a storm, and lightning-freighted clouds
Stream up from the sea-gulf.

1ST ARTIF.

Hear'st thou not

The thunder mutter on the rim of heaven ?

Such clouds!—their blackness seems to come from
hell,

To terrify and thunder-strike the world !

Would we were hous'd, safe from these heavy rain-
drops !

Away, away—this storm confounds our wassail !

[*Exeunt.*

ECHO (OR BATH-KOL) *Voice from Heaven amid
the thunder-storm.*

'Tis fit—'tis fit—it is a fitting tree,

And fitly set, for Haman and his house !

Let the voice go rebounding through the heaven,

Concordant with the thunder's dreadful roll—

*'Tis fit—'tis fit—it is a fitting tree !**And fitly set, for Haman and his house.*

ACT II. SCENE I.

A Room in the Queen's Palace.

ESTHER, CHOLTAH.

ESTHER. What mean these tears, my Choltah ?

Why dost thou

Avert thy face from thy Hadassa thus,

And sob, in secret, o'er some unknown grief,

Deem'd all-unworthy of thy mistress' ear ?

Thy sister-handmaids, too, that heretofore,

Were wont to meet me with salute of smiles,

Have chang'd their cheer ;—'twas yester-noon we
walk'd

Within my garden, plucking in our sport

The springing flowers, and ever and anon

We sat us down in some rose-braided bower

To listen to thy sweet voice-wedded harp ;—

Then every face beam'd gladness ;—but, to-day,

There is no joy—what means this drooping cheer ?

Daughter of Achzah ! tell me ?

CHOLTAH.

O, my lady !

My Queen ! my mother ! grief drives back the words,

Which thy august commandment bids me utter !

ESTHER. O, if thy queen's command, thy mother's wish,

Thy friend's compassion, be of ought avail,
Check, if thou can'st, the grief, and let thy words
Reveal to me its cause: What hath befallen
Thee, or thy kindred, or thy tribe, in Shushan,
That thus thou weepest?

CHOLTAH. Not for me alone
I weep, nor for my kindred, or my tribe;
A wider sphere doth occupy my grief;
I weep for Israel's captives!

ESTHER. They are driven,
Like chaff, wind-wafted from the thrasher's floor,
Afar, in every land throughout the world,
The very proverb, and the pointing-stock,
Of idol-worshippers, and heathen folk,
The mock'ry of their children, as they pass
Through streets and sorry lanes—what worse can hap
The harass'd children of Jerusalem?

CHOLTAH. Afflicted though they be, driven forth
their land,
And overheap'd with sorrows, yet—they breathe;
Though life to them be but a fiery furnace,
Thrice-heated with oppression, yet—they live:
Now, ev'n this mis'ry-fraught, poor privilege,

Is grudg'd them, and a mightier blow impends
To blot them out of being!

ESTHER. From what hand,
Or what deviser?

CHOLTAH. From some wicked heart
Of Persia's Court, our country's enemy,
Ev'n in the palace where thou reign'st as queen.
Thine uncle Mordecai, the son of Jair,
Got cognisance beside the palace-gate
But yesterday ; and soon the tidings flew
Like fire across a wither'd wilderness,
Dreadful, from house to house, from street to street :
The city Shushan was perplex'd ; the son
Of Jair, sackcloth-girt, with ashes smear'd,
Went out into the midst of this great city,
And, with a loud and bitter cry, he cry'd,
Through street, and square, and lane, bewailing loud
Himself and brethren, with a shrieking voice,
So dismal, and so full of melancholy,
That even the dogs that kennel'd lay, alarm'd,
Answer'd in howls of horror from each house
Of Shushan as he past : Meanwhile, his brethren
Sat shivering in their dwellings' darkest nooks,
With fasting, weeping, wailing ; many lay
All night in sackcloth, wallowing in the dust,

Tossing in terror, lest some bloody sword,
Unseen till the death-blow, should suddenly
Be struck into their hearts.

ESTHER.

Alas, my country !

My brethren and my sisters ! Woe that we
Seem born for very trouble,—that our cup,
No sooner drain'd down to the dregs, again
Is fill'd with bitterness !—So wrathful man,
God's agent, oft has, with his wise permission,
Already wrought against us, and once more
Plots malice :—But the wrath of man, perform'd,
Shall praise Him, and its useless, base remainder,
Shall be restrain'd.

CHOLTAH.

Our hope is set in Heaven,
And, under Heaven, in her whose royal head
Wears the rich diadem that Vashti wore.

ESTHER. Frail is the trust in creature that is born
Of woman, but, when God invigorates,
The weak say, we are strong :—The son of Jair,
Mine uncle—wherefore doth he keep aloof,
Mid such alarm, concealing curiously,
As of set purpose, from his brother's daughter,
The project that is publish'd ?—Yester-eve
I look'd out from my lattice, seeking him
With anxious eye, where he was wont to take

His daily walk before the women's court ;
But his place knew him not.

CHOLTAH. He came, my Lady,
Ere sunset, to the gates of th' outer court,
Claiming as wont, admission to the queen ;—
But clad in sackloth-vest, he came : his head
Defil'd with ashes, and with dust, up-caught
Ev'n from the trodden street ; and thrice he sued
For entrance,—thrice the royal porter chid him
Back with harsh words, saying,—*No man was suffer'd
To pass the king's gate cloth'd in such a garb !*

ESTHER. So, Persia's law forbids that I should know,
From his own mouth, mine uncle's sorrow ;—yet
'Tis not forbid that, through some other mouth,
Some internuncio of mutual faith,
I should be let into his inmost thoughts ;—
Shall Elam's queen, alone of all her people,
When dangers gather round, sit in her palace
Unconscious, and uncareful ?—Call in hither
The trusty Chamberlain, that waits on me
Attendant by the king's commandment ;—

[CHOLTAH, *retiring, calls the Chamber-
lain, who appears.*

—— Hatach !

Go seek mine uncle Mordecai, that stands

Upon the city-street, before the gate
Of the king's palace—take with thee a robe
Of princely worth, and tell him, 'tis my wish
That he do doff his hairy sackloth-vest,
And put his queen-presented garment on ;
And bid him tell the cause that covers him
With mortifying vestment, that I may
Know what it is, and why it is :—

[HATACH *retires.*

Now, my damsel,
Reach me my harp, that I may solace me
With one of Zion's solemn-thrilling airs :—

(She sings to the harp.)

1.

O Zion ! though thy beauty be !
Cast down by Him that dwelt in Thee ;
Although thy once glad ways do mourn,
And thou art now the Heathen's scorn ;
Yet, yet, my thoughts do linger still
Upon thy Cherub-shaded hill !

2.

Ah me ! the hymns that once were sung,
To many a harp by Israel strung,

Are silent now ; in all thy streets,
None now with song his brother meets ;
Thy gates are desolate and lone,
And all thy gladness now is gone !

3.

Thy daughters, once so blooming-fair,
Afflicted sit, and dimm'd with care ;
Thy priests, and elders, sackcloth-bound,
Weeping, sit silent on the ground ;
For bread, thy high-nurs'd princes cry ;
And all thy woe-struck people sigh.

4.

Thine enemies are now the chief ;
Thy spoilers glory in thy grief :—
O God ! as thou wert wont of old,
The troubles of my heart behold ;
My soul is humbled in my cry ;
Remember, Lord, my misery !

5.

Yet, yet I hope, when I recall
To mind his former mercies all ;

As God his ire hath shown, his love
So will he magnify, and prove ;
The Lord is good; therefore I will
Hope in his boundless mercy still !

SCENE II.

Chamber in the Palace.

ESTHER, HATACH.

ESTHER. 'Hatach appears—his countenance all-serious,

Foregoes his tongue, and, in its silence, doth
Prelude with heavy look his sad report :—
What be the tidings, Hatach ? Didst thou find
The son of Jair walking in his place ?
And what his answer to the queen's request ?

HATACH. I found the son of Jair in the court,
Before the king's gate, walking pensively,
Clad in his uncouth, hairy garniture.
I stood before him, but he saw me not ;

So strongly did his spirit work in him ;
His eye seemed rooted to the spot of ground
O'er which he pac'd ; he smote his thighs ; he beat
His breast ; he sobb'd aloud ev'n to the heavens ;
And cry'd, or seem'd to cry, with broken words,—
We are the people that have seen affliction !

ESTHER. O, utter not these lamentable words !
Into my breast like arrows they descend,
To cut into my heartstrings : O my people !

HATACH. I wept, and stood apart ;—I could not
speak,
For weeping o'er his pitiable plight,
So sad, yet so majestic in his woe !
Thrice I advanc'd—as oft I turned back,
Lacking the courage to fulfil my charge,
And break upon his melancholy mood :
At last, when in his storm of grief there seem'd
A pause, again I stepp'd before his eye ;
And said—The queen commands thee, son of Jair !
I have a special message from the queen.
She bids thee put aside thy sackloth-vest,
As bad of bodement, and to clothe thyself
In this fair robe, embroider'd by her hand,
All-over-woven with lilies and with flowers !
At which, I show'd the garment, when he turn'd

His eye aside—he would not look upon it—
But thrust it from him, with a flood of tears.

ESTHER. His, his, indeed, must be a mighty grief,
That thus perverts dear objects, and doth change
What most should please, coming from those he loves,
Into a thing delightless, as from those
He hates !

HATACH. And then, he rais'd his voice, and said—
Take back the broider'd garment to the queen ;
Tell her, her kinsman, in the present woe,
Dare not allow his sorrow-stained eyes
To look with pleasure on her gorgeous robe,
Though woven and broider'd by her gentle hand.
The son of Jair has no heart to wear
A dress of joy, amid the fearful griefs
That gather o'er his nation :—At the which,
I charg'd him, in your royal name, to tell
What he had learn'd from princes at the gate,
Or noisy rumour in the public streets,
Of those impending, dark, conspiracies,
That I might, to the queen's ear, carry back
Tidings of what she so desir'd to know,
But knew not.

ESTHER. What his answer then ?

HATACH. He open'd

To me the secrets of the barbarous-plot ;
Told me of all had happen'd unto him ;
How that the son of Hamdatha, who saw
The king's face daily, and, of all the kingdom,
Sat at the royal table first, had hatch'd
The scheme, through hatred at the name of Jew :
How in his zeal t' extirpate and sweep off
That name from under heaven, he had engaged
To pay to the king's treasuries, a sum
Equivalent to all their tribute's produce,
Thereby t' induce the king to ratify
His scheme, and seal it with th' imperial ring :
He gave me, too, a copy of the writing
Of the decree, at Shushan given, whereby
The Elamite is order'd to destroy,
Cut off, and kill, all Jews, both men and women,
From under heaven :—
He bade me show the queen
The scroll of meditated massacre—

[*Gives her the writing.*]

And to declare to her the urgency,
And charge her, in his own and people's name,
That she shall go in, strait, unto the king,
To supplicate him, and to make request
Before him, for her people.

Even from another place ; but thou, and all
Thy father's house shall be, for thy neglect,
Expos'd to malediction and to wrath
From thine own people, hating one that might
Have sav'd, and sav'd not :—And who knows if God
Hath not, even for this purpose, that thou might'st
Rescue his people in a time like this,
Advanc'd thee to the kingdom ?

ESTHER.

Would to God

'Twere so—Heav'n second that thrice-bless'd sug-
gestion,

Even to the full wish of my anxious heart !

Yet, I am fearful in this enterprise

So full of peril and of moment ;—I

Have not, these thirty days, been call'd to come

Before the king ; and it is known by all

His servants and his people, that whoso

Uncall'd, shall, whether man or woman, come

Before the king into the inner court—

There is one law—shall straight be put to death,

Excepting such to whom the king shall hold

The golden sceptre out, that they may live.

Such is the law of Persia, and it stands.

Yet, notwithstanding this life-threatening bar,

I, with my God to help, will gird me up

And fortify me for an enterprize,
Which doth require a manly fortitude :
Mean, weak, and frail, may in the hand of Heav'n,
Be the poor instrument ; but He, who sits
On high, a vast fulfilment oft evolves,
Of power beyond a giant's arm ;—The wife
Of Heber, in her tent, accomplish'd what
The warlike son of Abinoam could not,
With thousands at his feet.—Hatach, go back,
Report to Mordecai, as from the queen,
This answer,—That he gather all the sons
Of Jacob, that in Shushan's city be,
And fast ye for me ; neither eat nor drink,
Nor night nor day ; whilst I, and all my maidens,
Will likewise fast ; and so will I go in,
Unto the king, although the law forbids ;
And if I die, I die :—My people shall not
Perish, while Abihail's daughter lives !
Hatach ! bear to my uncle this resolve :—
The queen, into thy hands, as being one
Of her own faith and kindred, unto whom
Her privacy hath been intrusted well,
Commits these messages and nice affairs,
Requiring secrecy and quick dispatch—

Thyself, as wont, prove worthy of thy trust.

[*Exit* HATACH.]

(*The QUEEN prays.*)

O Thou, my father's God, my only Rock !
Amid an overflowing flood of griefs,
O hear thy servant's voice, who sits forlorn
And desolate, within the stranger's house,
Estrang'd from country, kindred, comforter,
Remote, alone, without a counsellor,
Without a helper—save my God alone !
By thee, have I been holden from the womb ;—
Without a father, without mother, thou
Hast been to me as father, and as mother,
Ev'n from my years of tenderest infancy,
So that my praise hath ever been of thee.
Help me, O God ! a woman desolate,
In this the time of her affliction ;
Remember my distress ; and in thy love
Make thyself known, as friend and saviour,
Unto thy meek and poor afflicted ones.
O bless thy servant with a confidence
Infus'd divinely by thy Spirit's power,
T' abide the trial that awaiteth her !
Fill thou her heart with boldness ; touch her tongue
With eloquence, that, for thy people, she

May plead with winning sweet audacity,
And free them from the raging lion's mouth.
Let those, that are thine adversaries, be
Cover'd with shame, confusion, and reproach.
But let thy people's heart be comforted !
God of the helpless ! be my God and help !

ACT III. SCENE I.

Bed-room in the Persian Palace.

AHASUERUS (*alone, with tapers burning before
him.*)

Where is thy dwelling, life-repairing sleep ?
Hast thou a temple in the city Shushan,
That I, a king, may search thee out, and court
Thy grace, and bribe thy midnight services,
With Ophir's gold, and India's pearls, and all
The heaps of Cyrus's vast treasure-house ?
If thou in Shushan haply hast somewhere
Set up thy drowsy, dreaming, tabernacle,
I trow, 'tis not within the precincts of the palace,
Where cares, and aye-suspected ambuscades,

Scare men upon their beds :—No, it must be
In some poor lane of my metropolis,
Where potters, toilworn at their whirling wheel,
Arm-exercising smiths, feet-plodding porters,
Vext water-carriers, with their swinging pitchers,
And other craftsmen that all day ne'er rest,
Rest richly in the night-time :—'Tis too true—
The son of Xerxes, 'neath his cedar-pillar'd
And golden-curtain'd canopy of state,
Sleeps beggarly, whilst the poor sandal-maker,
Whom yesterday I spy'd plying his trade,
And singing in his booth like nightingale,
Sleeps on his thin, unbolster'd truss of straw,
Ev'n as a king should sleep.—Now, would I give
This palace of my sires, with all its bravery,
For the poor, lean-flesh'd, handicraftsman's slumber !
Certes, 'tis the gold-couch that has infection,
Attracting tow'ards its glare a crowd of cares,
And fears, and jealousies, and wild alarms,
That buzz eternally like gadflies round it,
Tormenting the vex'd temples of the slumberer :—
Fy on thee, gold-gilt !—How are men deceiv'd
By the vain glossy superfice of things !
My subjects, as they pass before my palace,
Cast up their eyes, in an admiring gaze,

Upon the glittering roofs and pinnacles
Of this my king's-house ; and they think, good folk,
Good, simple folk, they think that he within
Is as superbly happy as his dazzle
Bespeaks without :—They know not—but I know
Who sleep not, when they lie upon their beds
Sound sleeping :—
But methinks, the lazy dawn (*looking through the
casement*)

Is long a-coming ;—I must while away
This heaviness, and entertain the time,
Ev'n till the golden horns of Mithras peep,
With recreation, meet to lull the mind,
And bless it with some benefit.—My Scribe,
My faithful reader and admonisher,
Who in th' adjoining chamber ever waits,
At the king's call obedient, night and day,
With voice, ton'd clear, and ink-case in his girdle,—
Will read me out some solace :—

Zethar ! (*He calls the Secretary.*)

Approach—bring out the royal Archives-book,
And read to me, until the cock do crow,
The court-affairs there-noted, fittest food
For a king's mind to meditate upon,
And regulate thereby his daily walk.

(ZETHAR enters with the volume.)

ZETHAR. My lord, O king! here, in my hand, I
bear

The Archives of your reign, and that of Xerxes :—
What portion of the annals shall I read?

AHASUERUS. Trim now the tapers, good my
secretary!—

Now—

Begin thou from the third year of my reign,
When the queen Vashti disobey'd my word,
Nor came to shew her beauty to my people:

(ZETHAR reads the history as contained in the Book
of Esther, Ch. i. ver. 3. to 21.)

AHASUERUS. (Interrupting.)

Ay, so it was—it happened right and well;
Vashti was punish'd, as her crime deserv'd
Of disobedience, banish'd from the court,
To the lone castle on Singara's mount,
Where old Semiramis in summer-time
Liv'd till the swallow did fly back again
To nestle 'mong the Ethiops; She was punish'd
As she did merit, and will learn obedience,
Upon the summits of Singara's mount.—
Now read the royal Persian journal on.

*(ZETHAR reads, as contained in the Book of Esther,
from Ch. ii. 21.)*

AHASUERUS.

(Interrupting.)

Teresh and Bigtha!—Desperate death-devisers!

Insatiate yearners for the blood of kings!

I startle yet, when I to mind recall

My narrow death-scape, on that perilous day:

I had just lain me down, for noon's repose,

In the cool alcove of my summer-house,

Suspicionless of all the world, and least

Of my two chamberlains; yet these two men,

That were entrusted with my chamber's care,

Had fix'd that hour for my dispatch:—But thanks

To my good angel, and good Mordecai,

The king-defender, (who had overheard

The traitors talking of their stratagem,)—

Ev'n in the middle of their ambuscade,

Where they did lurk, by the pavilion's door,

Mid the thick shadow of the pomegranates,

With poniards in their sashes, they were caught—

And hang'd forth-right on one of these same trees,

Whose sacred shadow they had violated,

Before the windows of my summer house.

'Twas a becoming termination!

For this, to Mordecai, what hath been done,

What dignity or what reward?—Hath he
Been, by a royal firman, set to rule
O'er seven-wall'd Ecbatan, as he deserves,
The faithful servant that did save my life?
Or, been appointed lord of Babylon,
To govern, with a prov'd and honest mind,
The brick-hous'd people of Semiramis?

ZETHAR. My Lord, he walks about these palace-
courts

Unhonour'd, unrewarded, unextoll'd,
For these deserts;—I saw him yesterday,
Without a robe of honour, meanly cloth'd,
Unnotic'd, unsaluted, disregarded,
Amid the multitude of Persian princes.

AHASUERUS. In this, there is neglect—It is not
meet

That he, that sav'd the son of Xerxes' life,
Should wander unrequited, and obscure;
He must be honour'd, and that not obscurely,
But in the sunshine, and the highway view
Of our great city Shushan, that my subjects
May see how well the king requites the man
That sav'd the king's life by fidelity,
And learn from his example to be true.—
—Is Haman in the court?—The dawn peeps in

Now at our windows—I must speak with Haman,
Regarding this our faithful Mordecai.

ZETHAR. My Lord, I will despatch a messenger,
Ordering his presence in the cabinet-room.

[*Exit.*

AHASUERUS. This is the error, fault, or pest of kings,
That faithful men, and upright, who have wrought
Good service to the king or to the state,
Shrink backward in their virtuous modesty,
Aye dreading to molest with forwardness,
And hence are overlook'd, or quite forgot ;
Whereas the forward and the proud, whose claim
Is but for shallower services, rush in,
With bustling mien, and clamorous demand,
Teasing the monarch for such high reward
As he, the doer, rateth wherewithal
His own misdeem'd and over-valued merits.
But worth is best known by its modesty,
And un-worth by its noisy forwardness.
This fault, the brand and obloquy of kings,
Shall be to-day corrected and redeem'd,
By my advancing one good, honest man ;
And Shushan, with one voice, shall cry—*The king
To-day hath honoured merit with its meed !*

SCENE II.

Chamber in Haman's House.

HAMAN, ZERESH.

HAMAN. The king has sent for me, my dame—

'Tis good,

Ev'n in the earliest morning-watch, to be

Up-rous'd from slumber at the call of kings :—

'Tis the prime pleasure—'tis no breach of rest,

To be disrested when the monarch cries,—

Arise and rouse ye for our empire's need !

I am his counsellor—treasurer—his father ;—

Without my arm to prop, the creaking cart

Of state-affairs would soon be overset

In Elam.—Haply, now 'tis some arrival (*to himself.*)

Of foreign tidings from the Caspian,

How that the Persian forces, warring there,

Beneath the standard of Pharandaces,

Have chas'd th' erratic, restless, Scythian

Beyond the Oxus, up to Marakand,—

Haply, from th' empire's other limit, where

Beside the rain-wash'd mountains of the moon,

The sun-burnt Ethiop carries on the war,
Rebellious, with the brave Mygabates ;
I wish the Tirhakah were soon put down ;
So would I put up, in his kingly place,
My son Parshandatha ;—his brother rules
The spicy coast of Seba, opposite
From Aden eastward to the Homerite ;
So would the brother's mutual seignories
Be brotherly, and neighbour-like adjoin :
The king's my friend, and will not hesitate
To advance my sons, as I shall point him out,
Fit exaltations for their father's rank :—
But—haply 'tis none of these—
Perchance, some crying home-affair—some points
Of nicer execution and detail,
Touching the better, cleaner, taking off
Of these same Jews, death-claim'd ;—of whom the
chief
Shall swing in heaven—his scaffolding is made ;
The rabble shall lie wallowing on th' earth :
Our gibbet yearns, as hungry for his prey.
The king's assent lacks only, which I will
Secure in this our morning-consultation ;—
And then—the gallows-tree for Mordecai !

[*Exit.*

ZERESH. So be th' event, my husband!—thus I
pray—

Thus hope—yet some sharp prickle of misgiving
Sprouts up amid my flowery heap of hopes,
Stinging my spirit into some alarm.

I did not like the colour of my dreams
Last night ;—The magi say, that gloomy dreams
Portend th' occurrents of the aftertime.

Methought, as I stood gazing on the sun,
He, in a shower of ashes, fell from heaven
Upon my lap ; and, as I look'd again,
I saw a bright archangel in his place,
His face like to the lightning, and his voice
Like to the bellowing thunder, as he cry'd,—
*Th' Almighty doth extinguish this bright thing
In Elam's view, and, constitutes himself
Th' eternal fountain of all life and light ;
And then his hand unroll'd a scroll, whereon
Was written,—God will render a reward
To the proud doer ; the meek man will see it,
And be made glad.* At which, I was afraid,
And woke. I pray the omen may be vain
Touching myself, my husband, and my children.

SCENE III.

Room in the Palace.

ESTHER, CHOLTAH.

ESTHER. Dawns yet the day, my handmaid !

CHOLTAH. Ere I clomb

The palace-stairs, I saw the morning-star
Dive his bright-spangled head into the blue
Ocean of Heaven, before the stronger light
That rose up to supplant him.

ESTHER. Open thou

My chamber-casement—let me see the dawn—
Uncurtain all the lattice, that the light
Unhinder'd may come in.

CHOLTAH. To-day, the god

Of Persia seemeth to rejoice in triumph,
As being the high holiday, wherein
His fiery worship is, by Persia's sons,
To be in public solemniz'd.

ESTHER. No marvel

The sun, that rules the day so gloriously,
Scattering his light over a thousand lands,

Should, by admiring men, be deify'd :—

Look at his golden coronet of rays,

(Casting her gaze from the window.)

As up he springs above yon eastern hill,

Filling with light the distant vales, that seem

To clap their hands with joy at his return !

Look at his nearer flood of radiance

Flung o'er fair Shushan's roofs and pinnacles !

Behold the tree-tops of our palace-garden

Bespangled with the morning's dewy tears !—

Lo ! how the citron, palm, and pomegranate,

And rose-bush, where our sweet Memnonian bird,

The Bulbul, sits a-singing to his rose,

Enkindle up their beauties to the morn,

And, with a whiter and more fragrant bloom,

Embower our palace in their branchy arms !—

Look at these beauties, and these splendours all ;—

Look at the sun,—the marvellous instrument,

The glorious work—and praise thou Him that made it,

—Choltah ! I do not worship God's bright sun,

Yet, in this glorious dawn, and day of joy,

I joy me, too, as one that worships him.

CHOLTAH. 'Tis piety, and conscious innocence
That form the day-spring of the happy mind !

ESTHER. Yea—so, my dearest handmaid !—Sure
'tis thence

That I'm to-day so fully of gaiety :
Oh, how my bosom strangely fluctuates
Between alternate confidence and fear !
Last night I laid me down upon my couch
In heaviness, and, when I thought upon
My people, and my kindred, in affliction,
A flood of tears gush'd forth upon my pillow.
Yet God pour'd out upon my lab'ring soul
The spirit of sweet sleep, (to his belov'd
He giveth sleep) ; and all the night I lay
Rapt into bliss, mid golden-winged dreams,
'Scaped from the crystal-gates of Paradise,
Such as are only known to happy minds,
Peaceful and pure, of whom th' Almighty makes
His angels, fiery-wing'd, the guardians.
And now mine eyes are lighten'd, and my heart
Braced with celestial fortitude, t' achieve
Deliverance and enlargement to my people,
If God shall, in a feeble woman's hand,
Prosper salvation.—But I must prepare
For this day's proper doings.—Hast thou learn'd,
From palace-talk, or rumour, at what hour
To-day, the king comes forth to occupy

His royal throne within the royal house,
Conspicuous to his court ?

CHOLTAH. To-day, O Queen !
Being the festival which Shushan keeps
In honour of her full-orb'd God—to him
At mid-day, Persia's monarch, with the flower
Of all his princes, in the palace-court,
Burns, in a golden grate, a sacrifice
Of India's choicest spices.

ESTHER. At the hour,
Say'st thou, of mid-day ?

CHOLTAH. When their restless god,
That like a post-haste courier flames along
From east to west, on Heaven's star-studded road,
Coursing in pomp around the zodiac,
Darts down direct a perpendicular ray
Upon the city Shushan.

ESTHER. Then, my Lord
Comes forth ?

CHOLTAH. The king of Elam then comes forth,
Array'd in all his many-colour'd robes,
The high tiara set upon his head,
Gorgeous with gold, and rows of radiant pearl :
And, having fired within its chafing-dish
That odoriferous offering, he takes

To take by force, and ravish from my lord
His heart, with stronger love than on the day
Whereon he queen'd the child of Abihail :—
What saith my handmaid ? Doth not Piety
To God, and to my kin, alike approve
The seemly stratagem ? Doth not the aim
Make innocent, yea, sanctify the deed ?

CHOLTAH. Let my queen do, as her inspired breast
Solicits her, for such embolden'd thoughts
Can only come from some inspiring source.—
I go, thine handmaid, to fulfil thy charge.—
As blessed is the aim, so be the art
Crown'd, as it merits, with a blessed issue !

SCENE IV.

Cabinet in the Palace.

AHASUERUS, HAMAN.

HAMAN. My Lord, O King, I come at thy command,
To hear thy royal bidding, and obey.

AHASUERUS. Haman ! I find there are some
oversights

In this our kingdom's daily governance.

HAMAN. Let the king hint his world-command-
ing will,

And what hath been o'erpass'd, in negligence,
Shall be recover'd by swift afterthought.

AHASUERUS. Haman—I find that, in our Persian
court,

Honour is lame, and, after honest merit,
Comes limping, impotent to overtake
And 'rich her with due favours.

HAMAN. Then, my lord,
If honour should be found, at Persia's court,
Haply to halt or loiter in his pace,
Speak thou, and he will straight resume his speed,
And rush to overtake the honour-worthy.

AHASUERUS. Let Honour, then, at my command,
wax swift
Of foot, and lag not so dishonourably.

HAMAN. What doth my lord, by these too-dubi-
ous words,
Enjoin his servant to perform ?

AHASUERUS. To him,
O Haman ! whom the royal choice selects

To deck and dignify with special grace,
What shall be done ?

HAMAN (*To himself.*) It is of me he speaks—
Me, me, he means—to whom more than myself,
Delights the king t' extend his special honour ?
Me his right arm !

My lord, O king, for him (*To the king.*)
Whom thou delightest in thy royal mind
To deck and dignify with special grace,
Let be brought out the royal vestments all
Which the king useth on state-days to wear,
And the gold-bitted steed whereon he rides,
And the crown-royal which is set upon
His head ; and let this steed, and this apparel,
Unto the hand deliver'd be of one
Of your most noble princes, that he may
Therewith array the man that thou delight'st
To honour ; and, on horseback, through the streets
Of this great city, bring him, and proclaim
Before him, with the sound of many a trump,—
Thus to the faithful man shall it be done,
Whom the king gratefully delights to honour !

AHASUERUS. Make haste, then, Haman ! take
the royal robes,
Wherein at Vashti's feast I sat array'd,

And take the steed whereon that day I rode,
 And do, as thou hast said—even all so do,
 To—Mordecai, the Jew, that daily takes
 At the king's gate his seat—let nothing fail
 Of all that thou hast spoken.

HAMAN (*with surprise.*) It shall be,
 My Lord, done all according to thy word ;—
 (*To himself.*) But with a forward and inverted will,
 Most cross unto the visible performance.
 To Mordecai !—the death-designed Jew !
 The man that sitteth forward in the gate !
 Confusion covers me at this command !

[*Exit.*

ACT IV. SCENE I.

Jewish Synagogue.

HEBREWS, HEBREW WOMEN, AND CHILDREN.

CHOIR OF HEBREWS (*Singing.*)

I.

O Thou, whose dwelling is on high,
 Whose palace-precincts are the sky ;
 Whose shadow is the mid-day sun ;
 Whose glory hath been seen by none ;

Look on us, Lord, thy children, here
Assembled in thy love and fear !

CHOIR OF HEBREW WOMEN.

2.

O Thou whose hand, with easy sway,
Guides huge Orion on his way,
And gently to thy purpose brings
The hearts of people, and their kings,
Look on us, Lord, thy children, here
Assembled in thy love and fear !

MEN.

3.

Swifter than eagles, Lord, are they
Who persecute us as their prey ;
They hunt our steps in street and way ;
They chase, insult us, and waylay ;
Unless thou help, our end is near ;
Help, help thy children, Lord, and hear !

WOMEN.

4.

As maiden's eyes to mistress' hand
Look tremblingly, and wait command,

So here, in our afflicted state,
Our eyes upon the Lord do wait,
Till mercy he and help afford ;
Have mercy, hear, and help, O Lord !

BOTH CHOIRS OF MEN AND WOMEN.

5.

All day, from morn to noon I cry ;
From noon to dewy eve I sigh ;
My grief-worn eyelids know not sleep ;
I sit and wail, I watch and weep ;
I cry, I shout, in my despair ;
Shut, shut not out, O Lord, my prayer !

CHOIR OF CHILDREN.

6.

Hear us, our fathers' God, as we
Spread out our little hands to thee !
O wipe away our mothers' tears ;
Still, still, O Lord, our fathers' fears ;
Our childhood-sobs we join with theirs :
Hear, hear O Lord, the childrens' prayers !

CHIEF OF THE SYNAG. (*Interrupting the singers.*)

Pause ye, my friends, and give a little rest

Unto your loud lamentings and your prayers ;—
Danger and Death are now most imminent—

[*Tumult is heard from without, whilst
the outer gate of the Court of the
Synagogue flies open.*

Hark, the loud din without !—The barred portal
That safeguards our assembly—

1ST ELDER. —Is thrust open—

2D ELDER. And one, who seems a palace-officer,
With eager step and mien, advances hither,
Fraught with important tidings—

CHIEF. Hark ! without
The fury musters, and makes dreadful head :—
List ye the outcries, and wall-piercing noise
Of Shushan's raging people in the streets,
As if all banded and tumultuating
Against us miserable—

1ST ELDER. The din of tongues
Increases, and draws nearer—

2D ELDER. 'Tis the people !
O mercy ! 'tis the people !—On our heads
Comes bursting now their fury !

CHIEF. If we die,
O friends ! let us die *here*—within our house,
Our holy house of sacrifice and prayer,

The dregs whereof that mouth of wickedness
Shall wring out, and shall swallow, till his bowels
Shall with the burning draught be all consum'd !

Rejoice, ye sons of Israel !—Now your dawn
Of joy, and light, and honour, is up-sprung ;
A cup of consolation hath been mix'd,
For you, your sons and daughters, by the God
That guards the exiles of Jerusalem !

CHIEF. Our tears of sorrow by these welcome
words

Are chang'd to tears of joy—one little moment,
On whose sharp edge suspended, life and death
Hung, as it were in balance, hath achiev'd
A change of mighty moment, which our souls,
Wasted with weary weeping and distress,
Have, in its fullness, scarce the pow'r t' enjoy,
Or, in its suddenness, to comprehend.

1ST ELDER. Tell us the grounds of our imparted
joy,

The heav'n-made means of our deliverance,
That we may, calmly, and by slow degrees,
Glide into the full measure of our mirth.

HATACH. To Him, who turns and twines the
hearts of kings,

As waters of a garden-rivulet,

According to his pleasure—to Him, first,
And, next, and, under him, his instrument,
To Elam's queen, is your enlargement due.

2D ELDER. O tell us all the process, and the manner •
Whereby that glad fulfilment came about ;
That, whilst we joy in the result, we may
Mix with that joy our gratitude and praise
To the thrice-blessed causers of our joy.

HATACH. The queen, as you do know, had liv'd
aloof

For thirty days, within her palace-chamber,
Unseen, uncall'd, uncherish'd, by the king ;
Hence, when the bruited news came to her ears,
How that her people were mark'd out for death,
Throughout her empire, on one slaughterous day,
To perish all, to be destroy'd and slain,
Her Persian realm to be their slaughter-house—
Disconsolate, drooping, desolate, she sat,
Fearful yet fain, heart-wavering, yet willing
T' intrude with supplication on the king ;
For Persia's law is binding, that whoso
Shall penetrate the king's interior court,
Uncall'd, shall die—excepting such to whom
The king his golden sceptre shall hold out—
Yet, yet in face of this death-threat'ning bar,

And, in defiance of the Persian usage,
Embolden'd by her virtue, and her God,
She dar'd to violate th' unforgiving statute,
And hazard and expose, even to the teeth
Of patent death, her royal life and person.

CHIEF. Alone, and unattended, did she pass
Within the perilous, forbidden precincts ?

HATACH. Alone, unguarded, unaccompany'd,
Save by her own unconquer'd majesty,
Her host of noble king-subduing charms.
I saw her in her beauty ; clad in all
Her robes of royalty ; her diadem
Magnificently set upon her head ;
Her gestures more than royal ; and her steps
Moving divinely to sweet harmony,
As if some angel, chiming in the spheres,
Adjusted and attun'd their heavenly motions
To his sky-ringing lyre.

CHIEF. The throned king,
What thoughts or feelings did he manifest
At this, his queen's intrusion ?

HATACH. The king,
Having just lighted up his incense-grate
To Persia's God, was sitting on his throne
Exalted, with his servants all about,

On right hand and on left, a noble row
Of princes, Persia's flower of chivalry,
Doing their homage to the fragrant flame,
That flutter'd up its spiry tongues before them,
As if to greet the sunny mid-day god,
The father of all dim terrestrial fire ;—
When, silently, with seraph-step, the queen
Came in among them, like Aurora's breath,
By stealth from the rich chambers of the dawn,
Into the heart of some rose-braided bower :—
In front, yet distant a brief space, she took
Her place ; and now was standing eminent
In all her beauty's bright magnificence,
Fair as the moon, when, from the Indian sea
Emerging, full, and round and clear, she comes
Upon the eye of mariner, that sails
Round by Comaria's fragrance-flinging cape.
She stood, majestic in her modesty ;
And, with her look, omnipotent, yet meek,
Before her, and all round about her, seem'd
To operate enchantment, where she stood.
The princes stood at gaze, and marvelling
At what might be the cause, and what the sequel,
Of her so venturous approach : The king
Sat captivated, spirit-bound—his eye

Caught and compell'd, as by a charm, his soul
 With admiration ravish'd and with love.
 He sat a moment thus;—suspense, meanwhile
 Strangled each breath—and then the monarch held
 The golden sceptre, that was in his hand,
 The sign of favour, and of dear acceptance,
 To the queen forth, and she with grace drew near,
 And touch'd the top of th' sceptre.

CHIEF.

Caught thine ear

With what words he accosted her ?

HATACH.

“ *What wilt thou ?*

Queen Esther ! said he, “ *What is thy request ?*
Ev'n to my kingdom's half, it shall be given thee :’”
 And the queen answer'd,—“ *If it shall seem good*
Unto the king, let the King come, and Haman
This day, unto the banquet, that for him
I have prepar'd.”—“ *Cause Haman to make haste,*”
 Reply'd King Ahasuerus, “ *that he may*
Do what Queen Esther says, and come to-night
Unto the banquet that she hath prepar'd.”
 And Haman goes to-night unto the banquet
 Queen Esther hath prepar'd.
 With such a sequel,
 So glorious to the queen and to her people,
 So ominous, and with disaster big

To Haman, as to-morrow will give proof,
Was crown'd this trying and eventful hour!

CHIEF. And Shushan's people—know they these
events,

And celebrate them, or with cries of wrath,
Or shouts congratulant, that thus their din
Is heard ascending round us?

HATACH. Tush—my tongue,
Though rapid in its joy-deliverance,
Hath not as yet been able to overtake
This other gladness-sealing incident!—
As from the palace-garden, I came hither,
Charg'd by Queen Esther to communicate
These tidings to her kindred gather'd here,
Lo! at the top of the great street, that from
The palace leads to Shushan's western gate,
Were standing the queen's uncle Mordecai,
And the arch-plotter, th' Hebrew-hating Haman,
Environ'd with a curious multitude
Of princes, and plebeians, summon'd round
By clarion's call to witness and partake
The spectacle about to be shown off;—
Beside them stood the noble-headed steed,
Whereon the king, through Shushan's streets, is wont
To ride, trapp'd gallantly, and into foam

Champing his golden bit, as if he scorn'd
To feed on ought but Ophir's beaten gold.
The trumpets sounded then ; and Haman took
Th' apparel which the king is wont to wear,
With the crown royal which is set upon
His head, and, in the sight of God's bright sun,
And all the Persian people, did array
With these the man he hated, Mordecai ;
And held the stirrup to him, as, with shouts
Congratulant from all the multitude,
The Jew was mounted on the royal steed,
Which seem'd to bow down gently to receive
A rider, by his master honour'd so ;
And—*Thus shall it be done unto the man*
Whom, for his truth, the king delights to honour !
Was loud with merry trumpet-clang proclaim'd :
I follow'd in their train, as down they past
Through the great street, whilst th' humbl'd Haman
walk'd
Before the steed whereon the Hebrew sat,
And ever and anon proclaim'd aloud,—
Thus, thus shall it be done unto the man
Whom, for his truth, the king delights to honour !
Thus, hath the faithful Hebrew, who preserv'd
The life of Persia's king, by Persia's king

Been honour'd with an honour almost kingly.
I left the street tumultuating, full
Of glad applauders, that, with loud huzzas,
Follow the Jew's triumphant cavalcade ;
Whilst Haman walks a-foot, as heralding
The glory of the Jew.

CHIEF. To God the glory !
To him, who smiteth through the cursed proud,
But beautifies the meek with his salvation,
Making him high in honour !

HATACH. In this joy,
Felt more intensely from preceding grief,
Having discharg'd my happy embassy,
I leave you, friends ; and, from your house of prayer,
Now not th' abode of weeping, will report
To the queen Esther our dear kinswoman,
Your gladness and your holy thanksgivings.

CHIEF. Heav'n's grace be rain'd in richness on
our queen,
The minister of God to us for good !

ALL (*singing.*)

1.

Thee, thee, O Lord ! I'll magnify,
For thou hast lifted me on high ;

My foes, that sought me to destroy,
Thou hast not made o'er me to joy ;
O Lord, my God ! I cry'd to thee,
And thou hast heard and healed me !

2.

Weeping, and woe, and sad affright,
May tarry with us for a night ;
But joy, so soon as night-shades fly,
Comes riding up the eastern sky ;
O Lord, my God, I cry'd to thee,
And thou hast heard and healed me !

3.

O thou, my glory ! praise and bless
Him who reliev'd my soul's distress ;
My tongue ! my harp ! my heart ! extol
Him, who hath heal'd my sorrowing soul ;
Him, who hath set me up on high,
Him, him, my glory ! magnify !

4.

O sooner shall the rising sun
Forget his day-long race to run,

Sooner the moon forget to move
Her ever-wheeling orb above,
Than my glad soul forget to bless
Him, who hath heal'd her deep distress !

SCENE II.

The Street of the City.

PERSIAN POTTER, PERSIAN WATER-CARRIER.

POTTER. Whither so fast, my pitcher-friend ?

WATER-CARRIER. Why, homeward,—
Home to my fruitage-supper—somewhat gnaw'd
By hunger—and no wonder, having march'd
All day from th' upper to the nether town,
In the procession of the honest Jew.

POTTER. Saw ye it out from first to last ?—I
stay'd
But the beginning.

WATER-CARRIER. Tuts—I saw the whole,
From where the king's apparel was put on,
To where the high-brow'd Haman took it off,

And the huge rabblement of Persian folk,
Cry'd,—Long live Mordecai, the honest Jew !
It a was day—few days like this in Shushan !

POTTER. So now our king his honour hath re-
trieved,
And paid, though late, the heavy-hanging debt
Of gratefulness to the good foreigner,
Who sav'd from the twin cut-throats, Persian-born,
His valued life.

WATER-CARRIER. True, true, as says the saw
Of Zoroaster—Gratitude, though late,
Is better than no gratitude at all.
Yet, after all, Achshirash is a king
Not naughty-hearted, as your kings now go ;
May-be he is too prompt, and nimble-passion'd,
And, when the grape's-blood quickens him, men say,
The simoom-tempest gets into his veins ;
He's quick and furious or for good or ill, —
Rather for good than ill, when following
His own complexion ; but when, having done
Evil, from evil counsel, he detects
Himself as naughty doer, he rebounds
Back into good with such a devil-fury
That good men are astonish'd, and hold up

Their hands upon their eyes, as if asham'd
Somewhat of goodness.

POTTER. Ay, friend, such the state
Of kingship—Kings withal (between us twain),
Are but a hapless generation ;
They say, Achshirash does not sleep a-nights,
Rests in his ease-couch very ill at ease,
Bolts up at midnight, as if thistle-stings
Had sprouted from his bed-clothes, cries for lights,
And will have some amusement made of noise,
Poets (your Persian)—readers—dulcet singers,—
To tickle his King's-ears, and drive the demon
Down from his palace to the dark town-lanes,
Where you and I inhabit.

WATER-CARRIER. Let him keep
His kill-sleep Demon to himself! Would but he,
When visited with these unsleepy spasms, step down
Into the quarter of the water-carriers,
We would him learn, and lesson, well the trick
Of sleeping soundly :—A good pair of pitchers,
Appended to his shoulders, and all day
Well-swung and dangled round from street to street,
With weight of water for the water-buyers,
Would work out slumber for him.

POTTER. Nay, sweet friend,

If he for this needs bodily exercise,
He'd get a better jading at my pots ;
Would he but take a blood-uprousing spell
Of day-work at my foot-whirl'd, bick'ring wheel,
I'll warrant good his majesty a night
Of noble sleep, sufficient for a king.—
But, hush—of good Achshirash ;—let him pass ;—
Observ'd you Haman's face, the Am'lekite,
To-day, as he walk'd on ? E'er saw you features,
Wherein, by Nature, Pride had built her nest,
Squeez'd and contorted to such agony
Of self-restraint and curs'd dissimulation,
Proving a spirit vex'd and mortify'd,
As his, when he paraded through the streets,
As beadle to the good man Mordecai ?

WATER-CARRIER. I did enjoy the anguish of his
face.

POTTER. But the good Mordecai ; albeit he had
Upon his head the crown of royalty,
And the king's garment flaunting from his shoulders—
Saw'st thou his simple, unassuming, bearing,
How meekly, modestly, he sat it out,
Blushing at all the honours forc'd upon him ?

WATER-CARRIER. I mark'd him well ; and thence
I do affection

This self-same Mordecai :—Albeit a Jew,
I'd rather have him for my creditor,
Than yon high-look'd, proud-hearted, Am'lekite,
Who seems to look upon the sun and moon,
As chiding them that they do shine upon
Another human creature than himself ;—
So tower aloft to heaven his Babel-brows !

POTTER. True—true—his towering top doth reach
the heaven ;—

Yet, yet, methinks, as thou remarkest well,
I'd rather owe this Jew a thousand darics,
Than twenty silverlings to this haught Haman,
Whose every feature scowls, and would up-rip,
Ev'n from your bowels, the few silverlings.—
Certes, these Hebrew folk are evil spoken of,—
Both men and women—Persia's babbling tongues
Scourge them too strong ;—what though they have
their God,

And worship him according to their guise ?

They're loyal subjects, and they're honest men.

—But come, let us pass hence—Pray walk with me

Home to my tenement in Potter's-lane ;—

There we shall sup on peaches and on pease,

And, in a homely cup of potters'-ware,

Be pot-companions, honouring the health
Of the meek Mordecai, the faithful Jew.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.

Chamber in Haman's Palace.

HAMAN, ZERESH.

HAMAN. Sweet wife ! The planets of this luckless
day,
Have turned yesterday all upside down ;
Would I had been in Midian with my flocks,
By the rock Jokthan, where a wall of cliffs
Had hedg'd me in from the huge infamy,
And shame, and disappointment, and confusion,
That met me every step I took to-day
In many-streeted Shushan !

ZERESH. O, my Lord !
Ambition has its little stumbling-blocks,
Snags of obstruction, that do, now and then,
Still catch and intercept the foot of him
Who marches up the mountain of world's grandeur.

'Tis but a petty tingling of the toes,
For one poor moment ; when the stound is o'er,
Onward and upward doth the great man march
With doubly-quicken'd pace, until he reach
The summit, where he stands a-top, a-towering,
With nought between him but the sun and moon,
His fellows in the higher ranks of being.

HAMAN. (*In a reverie.*) By Mithras and the
 heavens !

I hate him—who?—the man that moves not, bows not,
Whose name I cannot utter with my lips,
But deeply, deeply, lies it in my heart
Inseparably coil'd up as a serpent.
O may Arabia's vultures tear that heart
Out from my tossed and tormented bosom,
Ere it shall ever entertain a thought
Less full of sweet hate and malevolence,
Towards the man that so deserves my hatred !
May Midian's rav'nous eagles from my temples
Peck out my eyeballs, ere they brook the sight
Of him—the hated !
Of him, in any other attitude,
Than—hang'd up as a jewel-drop to deck
The tree made ready for his execution !
But how ? and what ?—O monstrous ! O confusion !

Hang'd up !—How can these hate-engender'd words
Be reconcil'd with this day's forced practice ?

'Twas I, that cloth'd him with the king's apparel !

'Twas I, that set the crown upon his head !

'Twas I, that rear'd him on the royal steed !

'Twas I, 'twas Haman, that went on before him,
And cry'd aloud, that all the city heard,—

“ Thus, thus, shall it be done unto the man,
The faithful man, the king delights to honour.”

Fie on the mouth, that could have utter'd it !

Shame overwhelm my face, that could endure

To face out the indignity practis'd

Upon myself in crying out his dignity !

Yet—all this I brook'd out—and here, within

My own house, not far from the gallows-tree

Rear'd for his death, I cowardly do live

To think of it, to fret at it, and say,

'Twas I, that cry'd his honours !

ZERESH.

O my Lord !

Accuse not thou thyself in thus enacting

Such incongruities of thought and deed.

Thy hatred is consistent, marching on

In even tenor, and commendable,

Sheer to its aim and end—thine en'my's ruin :—

It is the king, thy master's, waywardness—

HAMAN. The king, my master ! (I may speak of him ;—

Our chamber's roof is not o'erlaid with ears—
The king, my master, is as wavering-wild,
As wind, and wave, and weather all together ;
Is as unstable as the desert's sand ;
As changeful as the twice-seven-visag'd moon ;
As hot as is the siroc from the south ;
As light as rolling-thing before the whirlwind ;
As riving-violent as is the bolt
Hurl'd by the hand of thunder on the tree ;
All these extremes he proves to our extremity,
And brings his servants into jeopardy
By his unkingly rashness and caprice.
Witness his lately-seal'd and sent decree,
That every Jew in Elam should be slain,
Ev'n in one day, men, children, women, all
Hurl'd into one vast, undistinguish'd death,
That every Jewish house should be a shambles—
And here, to-day, as a preposterous prelude
To this blood-work, comes in our Mordecai,
Apparell'd in the king's own robes, and riding
On his own steed, confounding his decree,
And stunning blinded men with contradictions
Too hard for explanation !

ZERESH.

I begin

To fear these doubtings, these backsliding fits,
Of our imperial master—lest recoiling
Back from th' incensed mood wherein he, urg'd
By thy incitements, seal'd the death-decree,
He may, with more infuriate humour, wreak
His vengeance on th' inciter, and thus balance
Wrath against wrath. He, before whom to-day
Thou hast begun to fall, is no mean head—
He is the type and emblem of his nation—
He is the persecuted, death-proscrib'd—
Is the Jew Mordecai, for whom thou hast
Laid up a chosen death ;—and now that his
New-spangled star is risen up in the east,
It bodes, my Lord, I fear, a sudden setting
To thine i' th' west.

HAMAN.

Prithee, my dame—bode well,

Leave to th' astrologers their twinkling stars,
With all their cunning bodements thereon hanging.
Up, my proud heart ! up ! cease not to aspire !
For why ?—

Our house hath been disparag'd, not degraded.
Slighted, not sunk, o'erpast, but not o'erthrown ;—
Are any of its mighty props and bulwarks
Driven from beneath it by this mean affront ?

Is not the glory of my riches still
Secure ? Can any Persian cope with me
For the stor'd gold ? Are not my sons and daughters
In number as a flock, and mounted high
In exaltation—with their multitude
Hooping my greatness round, and pinning it
In firmness to th' existing state of things,
As th' Arab's tent is pinn'd firm to the ground
By its great multitude of props and stakes !
Hath yet my towering state and elevation
Been levell'd down to the plebeian pitch
Of Persia's horde of nobles ?—Ev'n to-day,
That brings its buffet, brings its comfort too,
Sufficient to compensate ill with good,
And make forget dishonour in the honour
Of being first at table with the king.
For, know, sweet dame !
To-day, Queen Esther hath invited me
Unto the banquet for the king prepar'd,
Me only of the princes—with the king
I dine to day !

ZERESH.

Seize the time,

My Lord !—improve the banquet's jollity—
When souls, the wine-flush being up, are pliant ;
Oblit'rate and dash out from the king's brain

To-day's more recent haps, and in their stead,
 Recall and re-instate him in the past,
 His wrath of yesterday :—urge home upon him
 His own promulg'd decree, his royal name
 Pledg'd to the provinces, in Median mode,
 Irrevocably—how the sword stands bare—
 How the tree waits—(*Here HARBONAH and MEHU-*
 MAN, two of the King's chamberlains, enter.)

HARBONAH. My Lord, Duke Haman ! we
 Come, at the King's commandment, to request
 In haste thy presence to the feast prepar'd
 By the Queen Esther, for the King and thee.

HAMAN. I go, obedient to the royal call.

[Exit with the Chamberlains.]

ZERESH. Heaven speed thee, O, my Lord !—This
 feast, I pray,
 May it have happy ending to our house !

ACT V. SCENE I.

Banquet-room in Esther's Palace.

ESTHER, AHASUERUS, HAMAN.

ESTHER. I hope my Lord hath, with approving
 eye,

Look'd on my banquet's preparations,
Accepting them, in his benignity,
From his most loving servant.

AHASUERUS.

As a sign

Expressive of thy loving heart, Queen Esther,
Towards thy lord, whose mood, new-form'd by thee,
Now drops cold court-formalities, and glories
In pleas'd obedience to his Lady's sway.
Thy reign, my sweet dame, has induc'd a change
In Persia's cramp'd, unchanging court ; Ere while
The King demanded Vashti to come forth,
And shew her beauty in his banquet-hall,
But she refused to come at his command ;
To-day, Queen Esther begs the King to come
To her wine-banquet, and the King comes forth
Obedient, as invited.

ESTHER.

Persia's ladies,

From this example, will but study more
To captivate and win, by modest arts,
Th' affections of their lords, which is the true
Triumph of woman, and her honour'd crown
Surpassing, in its glory, the gold-crown
Set up with pearls.

AHASUERUS.

My qucen's enchanting grace,
Uniting both, gives lustre to both crowns ;

And he, thy husband crown'd, now for a season
Before thee puts his proud tiara off,
Proffering himself thy subject, and beseeching
That thou would'st, to his kingly power, afford
The opportunity of blessing thee,
Up to thy passing merits, with some boon
Befitting Cyrus' grandchild.

ESTHER. O, my Lord,
Thy hand and heart are gen'rous, and invite
The free expression from my tongue—but this
Poor bosom trembles.

AHASUERUS. Wherefore hesitates
Thy tongue to hint thy heart's desires? Disclose
Thy thought, and say what thy petition is,
Queen Esther! And it shall be granted thee;—
And what is thy request, and it shall be
Performed, ev'n to the half of this my kingdom?

ESTHER (*bursting into tears*). O, my Lord!—

AHASUERUS. Why weepest thou? what mean
These tears and these emotions, on a theme
Foreign from tears, associate to joy
Rather than sorrow?

ESTHER. How can I, my Lord,
Ev'n in thy royal presence, keep my heart,
From bursting out in sorrow, when that heart,

Nigh-broken, labours with the fear of death,
For me, and for my people ?

AHASUERUS.

Fear of death ?

For thee, Queen Esther, and thy people !—What
Mean these strange words ?

ESTHER (*Rising from her seat*). My Lord, and
royal husband !

A suppliant, here I stand before thee !—But
I do not ask from thee, or gold, or gems,
Or pearls, or palaces, or provinces,
To glorify my woman's vanity ;
I do not ask the one-half of thy kingdom,
To make myself co-partner in thy pomp,
And ride in progress through th' admiring land,
Partaker of the King's felicities ;—
These, these I ask not ;—But, if in thy sight,
O King, I have found favour—if it please
The King—Oh, let my life, at my petition,
Be given me—let my people all be spar'd
At my request !

AHASUERUS.

Thy people's life—thy life—
Queen Esther ! In what danger do they stand ?
Who perils thee and thine ?

ESTHER.

O we are sold,
I and my people, we are sold, my Lord,

To be destroy'd, to perish, to be slain !
Had we been sold for bondmen or bondwomen,
My tongue would have been silent, nor would have
Troubled thy royal ear with my complaint ;
But we are sold, my Lord, for worse than bondage—
I and my people, we are sold to slaughter,
Sold to the sword, deliver'd to the death !

ACHASUERUS. Who is the man, and where is he
that durst

Presume to do so in his heart ?

ESTHER.

The man,
The adversary, and the enemy,
Of me and of my people—he who hath
Devis'd, and doom'd, and destin'd us to death,
The plotter from whose spite-inspired breast
Hath sprung a scheme so shameful-murderous,
Blasting thy kingdom with depopulation,
Sweeping my Father's people to the tomb,
Effacing, from the earth's remembrance clean,
The name and memories of me and mine,—
The man, whose cruel heart hath hatch'd all this,
Is—he that sits beside thee, O my Lord,
Ev'n this same cruel Haman !

HAMAN. (*To himself.*) Gracious Heaven !

What woe, what vengeance waits, for this, the head
Of miserable Haman !

AHASUERUS. (*In wrath.*) He that sits
Beside me, murderer of my queen and people !—
Whence, and on what pretences is queen Esther,
Together with her people, thus expos'd
To damage and to death ?

ESTHER. Because, my Lord,
I am a Jewess !—And my kindred, Jews !
(*The King and HAMAN here start with surprise.*)
My people, Jewry's miserable exiles !
This is your Lady's and her people's crime—
This, this, the accusation and the ground,
On which we are betray'd—

AHASUERUS. By him, to whom
My favour hath been shown—to whom my ring,
The pledge of royal trust and royal favour
Hath been committed ?

HAMAN. (*To himself.*) Ruin, ruin, death,
O'erhang thee now, most miserable Haman !

ESTHER. Yea, O my Lord ! by him who hath
empoison'd
Thy royal ear with his malignities,
Abus'd his noble function, and his trust !—

Look on his countenance's self-accusation !
See the soul-tumults which a conscience causes !
See how the guilt, up from his hate-wrung heart,
Where the blood-thirstiness had nurs'd itself,
Comes mantling o'er his visage !—
Oh, no—no—
Guilt cannot look on injur'd innocence—
Those that his thought has sentenc'd to the death,
How can his eye endure to look upon ?
Look on me, Haman ! Think of Mordecai,
Mine uncle ! All my people, young and old,
Women, and little children, all mark'd off,
All doom'd, in one black murder-making day !

HAMAN. (*To himself.*) O rather might the
 reddest thunderbolt,
Laid up in heaven for those that merit death,
And wish it, light on my devoted head,
Than hear all this !—

ESTHER. Thou, Haman, art the man !
Thine is the slander and the accusation !
Thine is the writing and death-warrant drawn !
Thine is the sealing with the royal ring !
Thine are the orders given, the preparations,
The blood-appointed day !

HAMAN. (*To himself.*) Strike ! strike me, Heaven !

AHASUERUS. (*Rising in great indignation.*)

My trust belied!—the king's great name abus'd
To a most bloody and most damned purpose!
Ha! Is it so—me cheated—me betray'd—
By falsehood and deceitful practises,
Me made partaker of most innocent blood!
The royal goodness wickedly beguil'd!
The royal signet traitorously us'd
For savage slaughter, as if I the slayer!

(*The King retires by a side Chamber-door into
the adjoining garden of the Queen's palace.*)

HAMAN. (*To himself.*) The king—he is gone
out in wrath!

Death now awaits me—In my huge despair,
To what shall I resort?—
—Yield thou proud heart—stoop, haughty heart!
to this—

This—which thine arrogance hath brought thee to—

(*He throws himself in the lowest attitude of sup-
plication on the couch of the Queen.*)

(*To the Queen.*) O Lady! look upon me in thy
mercy,

For in my guilt I cannot look on thee!
Caught in the deadly snare I laid for others,
Here, a poor trembling suppliant I lie,

Here, prostrate at thy feet, asham'd, confounded,
Crush'd and distracted with the magnitude
Of my own crime, which now appears in all
Its fearful and abominable grossness,
When back reflected to my sinning soul
By thy most pure and perfect innocence !
O spare the self-condemn'd, whose tortur'd breast
Already sinks under a thousand stings
Inflicted on himself at sight of thee !
Spare him to undergo a life of pangs
Sufficient to atone, for his misdeeds,
By years of long and terrible endurance,
As suits his heinously-enormous crime.
Oh, by thy own sweet sinlessness of spirit !
By thy lov'd kindred, whom my hate has outrag'd,
Thy lineage, and thy birth, of which, until
Thy mouth reveal'd it, I was ignorant,—
Oh, by the Hebrew's God, with whom is mercy !
Spare, spare the life of him, whose only plea
For pardon is thy queenly clemency !—
My life !—
'Tis for my life alone I supplicate —
Let all my gold and riches perish from me,
Those honours, stuck upon me, let them perish—

Spare but my life—entreat the king to spare
My life!—

ESTHER. O thou, who in thy wickedness
Hast been ensnared—And art reserv'd— But see!

(Here the King re-enters, clad in red raiment.)

My lord returns, apparell'd in his robe
Of red, the sign of chafe and hot displeasure!—

AHASUERUS. What—hath th' arch-caitiff not
achiev'd enough

Of wickedness, unless he perpetrate
And add another, more flagitious,
To his already-monstrous heap of crimes?—
—Before mine eyes, and in the royal house?

(The King summons his guards and Chamberlains from the adjoining antechamber.)

Abigtha! Harbonah! Mehuman! Biztha!
Seize, seize this man, and bind—Cover his face—

(They seize, bind him, and cover his face.)

Divest his finger of th' imperial ring,
And lead him to the pomegranate, whereon
The traitor Teresh, with his comrade, perish'd.

HARBONAH. O king! if to thy servant's tongue
thou wilt
Grant brief permission—

AHASUERUS.

Speak, Harbonah!

But let the words which thou dost proffer, be
Concurrent with my swelling tide of wrath.

HARBONAH. My Lord, O King! be't known to
thee that this

Condemned man, in plotting other's death,
Has, by a fatal and forestalling haste,
Completed the adjustment for his own.
Within his house's court, he has set up
A gallows, fifty cubits in its height,
Fronting the window of his dining-chamber,
Whereon he had devis'd and purposed
To hang, before the eyes of all his house,
The man he hated, for the good to thee
Spoken and done, ev'n Mordecai, the Jew,
Whom in his grudge, he had prejudg'd to death.
This I have learn'd from the Artificer
Employ'd in fabrication of the wood.

AHASUERUS. Fit machination for such baneful
brain!

To his own gallows drag him—pattern him,
According to the example and the mode
He had design'd for others—flesh his gibbet
With his own burthenous sin-laden carcase,
That men may say, that see him, *Lo! the man*

Of mischief!—His own mischief hath o'erta'en him!
Away with him to death!—To-night's bright moon,—
Let her not set i' th' west before she fling
His pendant shadow on his own house-wall.

HAMAN. Woe, woe unto my pride and haughtiness!

How hath that haughty spirit wrought my fall!

(He is dragged off by the Chamberlains.)

AHASUERUS. Now that our royal breath has blown
away

This pestilence from off the world, 'tis time
That modest merit should up-mount on high,
And purify our realm from past pollution.

My kingdom needs an arm, an ear, an eye
To see, hear, act; to whom th' imperial rule
Can be confided safely; one who can

By prudence disembarass our affairs,
Embroided of late by this blood-meditater,
And reinstall us in the public fame;

(To the Guards.) Call Mordecai, the Jew, the
man who sav'd

My life, when treachery encompass'd it,
And who, from this priz'd deed, which, till to-day,
Lay back unrecompens'd, hath undergone,
In meekness and humility, the scowl

And persecution of his envious foe.
That deed doth in itself present a claim
To our imperial favour, being done
In the pure spirit of fidelity,
Unbrib'd, unbargain'd for, and unsolicited,
And having, for its aim and scope, my life :
That claim, already strong, is now become
Of double strength, combin'd (as now we know)
With circumstance of consanguinity
To our beloved queen.

ESTHER.

My lord, and husband !

In the concealment that the Jew, who sav'd
Thy life, was uncle to thy spoused queen,
(For his was that injunction to conceal),
Lurk'd no disloyalty nor disrespect :
'Twas but the virtuous diffidence of him
Unwilling to be noticed on the ground
Of being so related ; he would not,
That, to your royal ear, should be convey'd
Matter to you so trivial.

AHASUERUS.

This reserve,

By modesty suggested, doth the more
Confirm to me his merit, and enforceth
That claim, already strong enough, with such
An amiable addition, that my choice

Of him—the saviour of my life, the uncle
Of my queen Esther, th' unobtrusive courtier—
To be my arm and empire's minister,
Remains the more approv'd, confirm'd the stronger
By every special commendation.

(The Chamberlain leads in MORDECAI.)

HARBONAH. My lord, O King, I lead into your
presence,

Him whom your word commanded—Mordecai.

AHASUERUS. Hail and glad welcome to the
faithful Jew!

MORDECAI. O King, I heard thy summons—and
obey'd,—

And here, in silence, wait thy high commands.

AHASUERUS. Stand forward, Mordecai!—Thou
son of Jair,

Approach!—too long thou hast been thrust behind,
Shaded and screen'd by thine own modesty!

The faithful man, and diligent and true,
Shall stand in presence of the king, and not
Be mingled with the invidious, and the mean,
That push his unassuming virtue back,
That so their meanness may steal all the notice.
Stand forward, noble Hebrew! and receive
As thy deserved due, too long delayed,

Th' abundance of thine honour ;—Now, mine empire
Is needful of an arm, t' administrate,
In lieu of that cut off, as too corrupt,
And rotten—Here I put upon thy hand
My ring, the seal of rule—and throw the robe
Of purple on thy shoulder—that, when thou
Walk'st forth into our many-streeted Shushan,
My people, by these ensigns, may discern,
And recognise thy dignity.

MORDECAI.

For this grace

Shown by my lord, the king, unto his servant,
How can his servant speak his grateful sense
More strong, than by imploring that his God,
The Hebrews' God, may out of Zion bless,
O king ! thee and thy house and land, that so
Prosperity, and peace, and righteousness,
May flourish in thy walls and palaces,
And all thy kingdom be one house of joy !

AHASUERUS. Thou hast prevented, Mordecai, my
tongue

In this thy benediction and thy speech :
I wish our Persia to be one house of joy,
And Shushan it's chief chamber :—Wherefore, I
Have call'd, and do associate thee, to be
My mate and help-fellow in this career

Of bliss-making, that all my subjects may
In unity and happiness be wedded,
As in one noble marriage-feast of joy.

MORDECAI. To be thine arm, my lord, thine ear,
thine eye,
As coadjutor in beneficence,
To point, anticipating, out the spots
Whereon the royal goodness should be shower'd,
Shall be, O King, thy servant's happiness,
His duty, and his glory.

AHASUERUS. For this purpose,
The Haman-hatch'd, accurs'd, destruction-plot,
Impending o'er thy fellow-Hebrews, must,
By counter-edict straight, be obviated.
Let a decree be written, to reverse
(For Persia's evil laws may be revers'd)
The letter of the Agagite, devis'd
For th' extirpation of the harmless Jew ;
Let it be drawn out in our royal name,
And, with the king's ring, seal'd, and sent abroad
To all our deputies, and province-rulers,
A countermand of mercy, casting all
The previous death-warrant into extinction,
And, in its stead, presenting to the Jew
Light and delight, and gladness, joy, and honour ;

And, to my Persian people, urging peace,
And neighbourly regards, and sweet affections,
The solder and the cement of a state :
Such also is the bond and chain that binds
The monarch's life and welfare to the life
And welfare of his subjects.

MORDECAI. These thy hests,
My royal master, shall, with proper speed,
Be expedited for the happiness
And glory of thy people.

AHASUERUS. For the house
Of Haman, the Jew's enemy,—it is given
To the queen Esther ;—let her exercise
Her pleasure on the household of the man
That would have slain her kindred.

ESTHER. O my Lord !
Now that the master-mind, and arch-contriver,
Hath been removed from his capacities
Of mischief working, be it from us far,
And from my kindred far, in his respect
To wreak a vengeance, haply undeserv'd,
On these, his seconders, or th' under guilty,
Familiars in his house. Let me entreat
My Lord's approval of my wish to spare
His consort's life : His children and his house

I do resign to Mordecai, my kinsman,
To overlook and govern.

 AHASUERUS. His discretion
Shall manage these and other our affairs,
And bring them to conclusion, safe and glorious
For Persia's king and kingdom. To his hands
We thus, in whole, entrust th' administration.

SCENE II.

Chamber of Haman's Palace.

ZERESH (*Alone—looking from the Casement.*)

How sweetly shines the lady-moon to-night,
Amid her sparkling family of daughters,
Who, round about her silver-seated chair,
Dance gloriously, in handmaidlike attendance !
Her beamy face !—how clearly does it throw
Off from the solid substances of things
Their shadowy semblances, that paint the ground
With figures darksomenely distinct ! Our roofs,
The parapets, and pinnacles, and points,
Lie, in their impress'd likenesses, asleep

Upon the pavement-court ;—and the tall tree,
'Scap'd from Zagrean mount, and here set up
Against my husband's enemy, and waiting
His time—as yet unoccupy'd—flings out,
As if in pride, his high-fork'd branchy arms,
Abroad in beauteous adumbration
Upon the ground beneath it.—But—behold !

(Looking earnestly from the Casement.)

A band of men, with cressets and with torches,
Passing the portals of the court—
They're enter'd—

Ha !—dragging on towards the gibbet's foot
A man, whose face is cover'd, and whose frame
Quakes with death's terrors—

Haply, may it be
My husband's enemy ?—In likelihood,
He whom our gibbet yearns for, Mordecai !
Now they draw nearer—now they bind the cord
About his fated neck !—His garb—his gestures !
By heaven ! they shew like ——
Can it be ?—Oh ! too like ! too sure !—Oh heaven !
'Tis my own husband Haman !

SCENE III.

Jewish Synagogue.

ELDERS, HEBREWS, &c.

CHIEF OF THE SYNAG. O never, friends, since
Time began to note
Man's fates and fortunes in his chronicle,
Hath ever happ'd an overthrow so strange,
So full of dreadful warning and instruction !
Such a recoil of mischief murderous
On the remorseless pate of the misdoer !
A fall so sudden, so precipitous,
Into the pit which his own hands had dug
Deep, deep, t' entrap the feet of Innocence !
One day compris'd it all—the morning saw
The haughty-hearted, lofty-brow'd, go forth
Rejoicing from his palace—his proud looks
Bespeaking empire,—in his garment's folds
Sporting about capriciously the fates
Of those his hate had, without cause, death-doom'd ;
The evening saw him dragg'd, dishonour'd, back

With cover'd face, a criminal, his eyes
Deny'd their function, and his scornful heart
Replenish'd rich with torturing contumely,
A victim to his own iniquity ;
His demon-prompted mad machine of death,
That, with uprais'd effrontery, did insult
God and the heavens, devis'd for other's use,
By Providence converted to his own ;
And he, for whom he had intended it,
Drawn up on high to occupy the place
Of honour, which his villany had lost.
O never saw the world such an example,
So terribly exhibited, how Pride
Precedes destruction, and a haughty spirit
Towers highest when on very verge of fall !
His fall is our uprise ;—our nation now,
Instead of sorrow, hath heart-filling joy,—
Instead of sobs of mourning, happy hymns,—
Instead of sackloth, garments of delight,—
Instead of fasting, feasting : Jair's son,
The representative of Hebrew glory,
Hath come forth from the presence of the king,
Apparell'd in his royal robes of blue,
And white, and purple, with the jewell'd crown

Of gold upon his head ; the city Shushan
Heaves, as a hive, with gladness, all her streets
Bestrew'd with flow'rs, and hung from side to side
With palm-branch, and with myrtle ; th' Elamite,
As in one common grand deliverance,
Shares th' Israelitish transport ; bright-cheek'd boys,
Their turbans all with lilies bunch'd about,
Run, shouting, to and for ; while black-ey'd maids,
Their sisters, hand in hand, parade along,
Their bosoms full of ripe-red roses stuck,
Spangling the way with Beauty ; lute and cymbal
Ring up to heaven ; while from the rebec's strings,
The hidden spirit of their harmony
Comes twangling forth, as for a merry-make,
Beneath the player's fingers ; joy disports,
Triumphant ; and the city Shushan now
Deserves her name, all-gay as is the lily ;—
We too, my friends !
Let us express our joy, as doth become us,
With gravity, and yet with fervency ;
Here, in this house of pray'r, that heard our sighs,
Let now be heard, ascending unto heaven,
The voice of holy mirth and thanksgiving.

CHOIR OF HEBREW MEN.

1.

The proud man, in his height secure,
Stood up to persecute the poor ;
His bow he bent, intent to slay ;
Upon the string the arrow lay ;
Th' Almighty rose, and smote him low,
And into pieces brake his bow.

CHOIR OF HEBREW WOMEN.

2.

But yesterday, the scorner frown'd
In wrath ; to day he is not found ;
He is return'd to dust ; his thought
Of haughtiness is come to nought ;
As worms his grandeur is become ;
His glory shrouded in the tomb !

MEN.

3.

O Thou, that in the dust didst lie !
Now is thy horn advanc'd on high ;
The kings of th' earth astonish'd see
The workings of thy God in thee :

For God hath now advanc'd thy name ;
Thy glory floweth as a stream !

WOMEN.

4.

Yet, not with man, the glory be ;
Weak, poor, and abject, what are we ?
Our Father's help, in ancient days—
His be the glory, his the praise ;
To him we lift the grateful voice :
His be the laud that gives the joys !

BOTH CHOIRS.

5.

O God of mercy ! that on high,
Didst hear thy people's mournful cry,
Accept these thanks—these tears that start
Joy-pregnant, from th' o'er-teeming heart !
Our joys, O God, though great they be,
Are magnify'd in thought of Thee !

SCENE IV.

ANGEL OF RETRIBUTION.

'Tis done—the work which God commission'd me,
His righteous minister, to oversee ;
The man of lofty state hath been debas'd ;
The man of lowly place hath been uprais'd ;
Pride hath been scourg'd ; malignity of heart
Hath been requited up to its desert ;
Whilst Merit, Modesty, and Meekness, crown'd
With just promotion, have their guerdon found ;
And Peace, Love, Joy, pervading every breast,
Make the whole land, but chief its monarch, blest.
Thus may the sons of men be taught how God
For the proud-doer, hath a vengeance-rod ;
Guides those in judgment that his counsel seek,
And, with salvation, beautifies the meek.
The fall of Haman, in his engines caught,
A fate so terribly with warning fraught,
May teach the world, how, in that heart, where dwell
The rankling passions, burns a quenchless hell ;

How Pride is Misery ; and, join'd with Hate,
Works but his own, when plotting other's fate ;
And that, how high soe'er the station be,
Man's truest Greatness is Humility !

THE END OF ESTHER, OR FALL OF HAMAN.

THE
DESTRUCTION OF SODOM:

A DRAMATIC POEM.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ANGELS.

ABRAHAM.

LOT.

* HATHAN, Eldest Son-in-law of Lot.

* ACHZAN, Junior Son-in-law of Lot.

ELIEZER, Steward or Chief-Shepherd of Abraham.

KINGS of Sodom, Gomorrha, &c.

PRIESTS of Baal-Peor, Asheerah, &c.

CHIEF-SHEPHERD or Steward of Lot.

SHEPHERDS, HERALDS, &c.

* MELAH, Wife of Lot.

* AHARAH, Eldest Daughter of Lot, and Wife of Hathan.

Two unmarried Daughters of Lot.

SHEPHERDESSES.

The Scene is laid at the Gates, or in the Town of Sodom,—the heights of Hebron, and Carmel, on the west of the Dead Sea, and commanding, from many points, a full view of the Lake, and of the Pentapolis, or Five Cities of the Plain.

* These four names are, as the Bible-reader will readily perceive, arbitrary, and are Hebrew words, having significations apposite for the personages. Melah, *Salt*,—Hathan, *Son-in-law*,—Achzan, *Contumacious*,—Aharah, *She that hesitates*.

THE
DESTRUCTION OF SODOM.

ACT I. SCENE I.

Plain of Mamre or Hebron.

ABRAHAM, ELIEZER.

ABRAHAM. Go, Eliezer ! leave thy herds a while
To feed, untended, here, on Hebron's heights,
And, with thy staff to stay thee o'er the brook
Of Bela, hie thee, with unhalting foot,
Eastward, toward the Cities of the Plain ;
There, near the gates of Sodom, or within
The confines of her slime-concocted walls,
Find out my kinsman ; and impart to him
The revelation angel-given, whereby
We know the doom just, just about to fall

From God upon the wicked:—To thine ear
I have reveal'd the conversation held
With One most holy ; to my brother's son
Speak thou th' important message, wherein life
Hangs peril'd ; urge him in my name and words,
To flee the sin-soil'd, fated territory,
And leave the men of crime to undergo
What God hath purpos'd.

ELIEZER. To my lord's command
Obedient, I depart ; To-day's bright sun,
That now is riding over Elam's land,
Shall, ere he droopeth toward Egypt's sea,
Behold me entering in at Sodom's gates,
To seek thy kinsman, and declare to him
Th' angelical announcement.

ABRAHAM. Go thy way,
Thou faithful servant!—May Heaven's peace and
 blessing
Follow thee forth, and back again in joy
Conduct thy steps to Hebron.

SCENE II.

Front of Baal-peor's Temple in Sodom.

KING OF SODOM, PRIEST, HERALD, PEOPLE.

KING (*addressing the Priest*). Now, Priest of
Peor ! pass into thy shrine ;
Consult thy god in secret ; and report
To us the tenor of his mind and mood :
Say, if he seals and sanctions with his smile
The celebration of the Three-days' Feast,
In honour of himself, and of the gods
And goddesses of our Pentapolis,
Propos'd by us his worshippers ;—this day
To be his own, the prime of all the three ;
The second to be bright Asheerah's day,
Both Sodom's queen and Bela's ; and the third,
Fullest and last, the land's Panegyris,
To be devoted to Gomorrha's god,
Old Chemosh, and the goddess silver-shrin'd
Of Admah and Zeboiim :—Enter then,
Announce our purpose, and bring back the will

And nod of Sodom's deity.

[*Priest enters into the shrine of the temple.*

KING (*continuing, and addressing the People.*)

Fair auguries encounter us, my friends ;
To-day it shineth glorious ; all the sky,
Swept by the south wind, clear from fog or cloud,
Seems doubly purify'd, and garnish'd round,
From rim to rim, with beauty and with light ;
Look now up to its mighty spanning arch,
And comprehend the glory overhead ;—
Then downward—see the beauteous lake, whose face,
Most clear, as is the molten looking-glass,
Throws upward, back again into the eye,
Heaven's sun-gemm'd, blue, convexity, with all
Our shores of olives, vines, and fig-trees, hung
With fruits and flowers, seen glittering in the wave
Earth, like a bride new-trimm'd, doth seem on high
T' up-shoot her blossom-tipt, sky-waving arms
T' enclasp the sun, her jolly-groom, that comes
Forth of his chamber prancing.
'Tis a day seemly-jocund to begin
The circle of our Feast-jocundities,
For Earth and Heav'n seem brush'd and burnish'd up :
And man's desires, high-bounding in his breast,
Crave to be richly quench'd and gratify'd.

He cometh forth—

(The Priest re-appears from the shrine of the temple—the King, addressing him, continues.)

KING. What count'nance shews the god ?
Pleas'd or displeas'd ? Must we to-day defer,
Or speed, to do his orgies ?—Speak it out,
Thou, waiter on Baal-peor !

PRIEST. All the signs,
O King ! bespeak th' accordance of the god :
High on his golden chair, he seem'd to nod,
Down from his lofty and roof-soaring brows,
His acquiescence in the triple feast
Design'd to honour him.

KING. Then 'tis decreed :—
Now, herald, put the trumpet to thy mouth,
And peal the tidings to the city forth,
Till every chamber ring a response back :
Bid them prepare the feast, march forth in pomp,
With lutes, and viols, and, in long array,
To Peor's gardens ; be the tables set
In every street, with roses strew'd, and wine,
And banquet-cheer ; but chiefly in the courts
Of this our Peor's temple, 'neath the grove
Of pines and plane-trees, whose sky-fanning leaves

Will gaily wave over the wassailers ;
Bring forth the table-furnishings of gold
And silver, kept for holiday display ;
The golden chalice, by Mizraim's art
Carv'd into curious emblems, which the King
Of Zoar sent a present to my sire—
Be it brought forth, and crown'd ;—let rivers flow
Of the rich juice, whose mother was the grape
That grows beside Damascus ; be each heart
Exalted, heav'd above humanity ;
Till the man-gratifying, sensual, god,
Himself be gratify'd, and smile to see
Th' harmonious homage of his worshippers !

HERALD (*blowing his trumpet.*)

A Feast ! A Feast !

People of Sodom, 'tis your king that bids,
Your god that backs the bidding ; 'tis his time
Of celebration ; honour him, your god,
With his due rites of city-banquetings,
And solace, of revelry and songs :—
Prepare ye, then, the great Baal-peor's feast,
And revel it in chamber and in street,
Till every soul be satiated with cheer !

SCENE III.

The House of Lot.

LOT, MELAH.

MELAH. It is a day, to Sodom's citizens
Festive and gay ; forth from their gates they go,
Unto the southern gardens, with long pomp
Of town-procession, in their summer robes
Of gallantry array'd, men, women, boys,
And damsels :--Let me go, my lord, to see,
If not to share, the common joy.

LOT. Be thou,
My consort, far from such assemblages ;
Approach not ; mingle not ; nor let thine eye
Err, even in gazing on the outside show
Of such celebrities.

MELAH. 'Tis not my heart
That longs to join them in their idol-love,
And idol-offering ; 'tis mine eye alone,
That craves to gratify its fond desire,
Upon the glitter of the glorious train,
Dress'd up with roses, and bespangled o'er

Up, unforbidden, to their roofs, to spy
The spectacle, as down the dazzled streets
Th' idolaters went gliding, as a stream :
Thus in Chaldean Ur ; but in this land
Of Canaan, where the Amorite outshine
The Chaldee gods, my lord doth stint his heart,
Denying us just pastimes.

LOT.

In the land

Of thy left father, thou didst, with my house,
Abjure thy father's vanities of gods,
The Baalim, and Groves, and Ashtaroth,
Whom thou with him didst serve ; and in their stead,
Thou didst adopt the God that made the heavens,
Ev'n Abram's God, the Living and the True ;—
Their feasts, their rites, their pomps, their lewdnesses,
Thou didst forswear ; nor, in their secrecies
Alone, but in their gay publicities :
O go not, then, my dame, ev'n with thy look
Into their secrets ; with their troops and trains
Let not the honour of thy husband's house,
Ev'n in the mere appearance, be conjoin'd.
Here with thy daughters tarry thou, recluse,
And guiltless ev'n of gazing on the pride
Of sin that sweepeth by ;—Let Sodom's men
And Sodom's women reel !

MELAH. The blameless soul,
Of its own virtue conscious, and secure
In its stay'd purposes of rectitude,
Stands firm, unswerving 'mong a multitude
That onward rush to evil :—In this thing
Minute, of my desire, be not my lord
Displeas'd that I prefer to please my heart ;—
Yea—'tis his honour that I follow not
His wish express'd, for, were I conscious less
Of innocence, I would be more inclin'd
'To yield compliance, and to tarry back,
Weak, and self-doubting, from that city-show
That so bewitcheth me.

[She departs from the Chamber.]

LOT. She goes, and leaves
Her husband more distemper'd, than displeas'd :—
Woman ! I do not for thy virtue fear ;—
It is thy proud unruliness of spirit,
Thy haughtiness, so froward to advice,
That startles me.—I pray my God it prove
To her no source of evil !

SCENE IV.

The Southern (or Ellassar) Gate of Sodom.

LOT, HATHAN, (*and to them* ELIEZER.)

LOT. Here, in this shade, my son !—here let us sit
Cool, quiet, and sequester'd from the din
Of our mad city, whose heaven-scoffing shout,
Sent up in honour of her revel-god,
Hateful (though harmless here) comes in our ears,
Like sound of the long surge that breaks in foam
On Gaza's sandy shore :—Hark ! how the peals
Ascend !—The city-walls can scarce contain
The clamour, and the restless revelry,
That agitates her people.—We are well
Apart, and sunder'd from the sinfulness
Of their intemperate, lewd, idolatry :
For this their god, who is no god, enjoins
Not temperate enjoyment, but excess,
Riot, and huge indulgence, and misrule,
That banish all reflection, and strike off
The bars of sober Reason from the soul,
Letting the baser passions headstrong loose

Pitch'd prosp'rously ; and his large flocks and herds,
 'Tween Mamre and the Hittite's frontier-land,
 Feed quietly within their hilly range,
 Attended by their herdmen : His domain
 Is wide, and safe, and lacketh danger ;—God
 Foreshows no evil to the shepherd-land
 Chos'n by thine uncle ; 'tis to this rich plain,
 Thy choice, that Abram's God doth signify
 Th' approaching fury of his wrath.

Lot.

What means

This dark, ill-omen'd, prelude ?

ELIEZER.

O my lord !

Be not offended at my sudden speech ;—
 I speak not from myself ;—It is thy friend,
 The son of Terah, and thy father's brother,
 That speaketh, when thou hearest these my lips
 Announce thy peril, and the dreadful doom
 Impending o'er this city.

Lot.

Say what doom

Thou hintest—earthquake, thunder, fire, or flood,
 Or sword of foe ?

ELIEZER.

My lord——

HATHAN. (*Interrupting him.*) Your Mamre's
 plain,

Founded on rocks, and iron-bound with cliffs,

No doubt, is stable ; but, methinks, our vale,
Imbedded low between the mountain-rows,
Is solder'd with bitumen ; Earth may quake
All round, and shake her mountain-pillars down
Ere it shall thrill through Siddim's vale ;—Our folk
Shall sleep, as in their cradle, all secure,
When, on your mountain-terrace prominent,
Your herdmen and your herds, in terror, shall
Rock to and fro in heaven.

ELIEZER. I come not charg'd,
My lords, t' interpret by what instrument,
Earthquake, or thunder, fire, or flood, or foe,
Heav'n shall fulfil it's purpose ;—'Tis not mine
To search into the hidden ;—but I come
To tell what is reveal'd—that God hath doom'd
This city to destruction !

HATHAN. 'Tis a tale
Brief, but most violent in its shock.

Lot. Thy words
 Carry enough of dreadful to alarm
 Hearts less impressible than ours ;—Hath he,
 My kinsman, in a vision been forewarn'd ?
 Or have the Seraphim, within his tent,
 Whisper'd the secret to his ear ?

ELIEZER. Nor dream,

Nor night-voice, nor the whispering Seraphim,
Have, to thy kinsman's darkling ear, convey'd
An inkling of the future ;—but most clear,
At noon-day, when the prone spring-flood of beams
Falls on the world, a Holy One appear'd
Before him, brighter than the sun that shone
In glory overhead ; a golden girdle
Compress'd and gather'd in his garment's folds ;
His eyes were as a flame of fire ; his feet
Were as the burnish'd brass, or sardine-stone
That forms the orient gate of heaven ; his right
Hand held a golden vial, which was full
Of the ripe wrath of Him that ever liveth ;—
His lips he open'd ;— and, in earthly words,
He parley'd with thy kinsman, as a friend,
Of Justice, Mercy, Truth, and Righteousness.
He said,—*The cry of Sodom was gone up,
Because their sin was very grievous ;* then
He turn'd his face toward the Siddim-vale,
And with a shout,—*Woe to th' inhabitants !*
He pour'd his vial out upon the land,
And sea.

LOT. These words, that action, are a sign
Too pregnantly significant ; and, join'd
With this Baal-peor's worship, the rude roar

Of Revelry and Rage that the near city
Pours out upon our ears, more than suffice
To warn us of the perils of the folk
Immers'd in lewdness, luxury, and sin,
With whom we do cohabit :—But, O, youth,
Son of mine uncle's house, after thy toil
Of journey, thou requirest rest, and food,
And water to thy feet ;—Pass in, with me,
Into my safe and peaceful house, that stands
Retir'd from the main city ; there we shall,
Around our household-table, crown'd with cates
Enlivening, yet temp'rate, talk at large
Of these most strange forewarnings.—Go with us,
My son-in-law ! for thou art of ourselves,
Bound in one precious fam'ly-bond of life.

ACT II. SCENE I.

Front of Asheerah's (Astarte's) Temple in Sodom.

KING OF SODOM, PRIEST OF ASHEERAH, HERALD,
PEOPLE.

KING. Another day dawns bright ; the sun looks
forth

From his bow'r-casement in the orient,
As gallant, and provocative of joy,
As he did yesterday :—Priest of Asheerah,
(The goddess-queen of Bela and of Sodom,
Whose head doth mimic the grass-chewing ox),
Enter thy shrine—consult—and see—and say
If to-day's time is timely for her feast—

*(The Priest enters the temple, the King
continues.)*

Each god and goddess in our rubric-roll
Must have his day, and duly be ador'd
With rites and orgies seemly unto each ;
Else would the hearts of these our golden gods
With jealousy fret visibly, and subvert
Our secular state and kingdom with their feuds,
Begot of human preference. *(The Priest re-ap-
pears—the King addresses him.)*

Consulter of Asheerah ! say how looks
The goddess !—Thwartly, or auspiciously ?—

PRIEST. My lord, O king, our goddess on her face,
Bears grace and kind acceptance ; she invites
Your subjects to her feast.

KING. Then let the day
Advance with joy—Sound, herald, with your trump—
Announce the celebration to the city !

HERALD (*sounding his trumpet.*) Joy! Joy!—
Asheerah, to her festival,
To-day bids male and female congregate,
Within the grove of myrtle-trees, that girds
Her temple round with salutary shade ;
For there hath Pleasure built his golden bower :
To this, her temple's master-luxury,
Let all the streets, and openings of the gates,
Houses and chambers, add their delicates,
Of viands, wine, and rose, and song, till all
The city swim from gate to gate in joy.
Prepare ye, then, the great Asheerah's feast,
And revel it in chamber, grove, and street,
Till every soul be satiated with cheer!

SCENE II.

The Southern (or Ellassar) Gate of Sodom.

LOT, HATHAN. (*To them the TWO ANGELS.*)

LOT. Here in the o'er-shaded seat, beside the
gate,
Sit we again, O son-in-law ! remote

From noise ; and here enjoy the setting sun,
Half-hid behind the rocks of Engedi,
Who, as he westerns down to Zoar's sea,
Look ! how he makes the shadow of the hills
Climb slowly up the vine-clad eastern heights,
That shut in our rich valley :—'Tis an hour
For precious musings fit—for sending all
The soul abroad in meditative gaze,
In admiration of the wond'rous works
Of God, which are above all measure great,
Sought out, by those that love him, and enjoy'd,—
Here now, by us, the more enjoy'd, since 'scap'd
Th' infection, and the reckless revelry,
That maddens Sodom's people, in whose souls,
Wine, pair'd with Lust, now mounts, and dispos-
sesses

All thought, all modesty, all self-regard :
What wonder, then, our ears have been alarm'd
With tokens of th' impending wrath of God
Upon these wicked ?—when we look at them,
Thus wallowing in their sty of wickedness,
Well augur we chastisement, as befits
Man's huge corruption ;—but, when up from them
We look, upon the beauty of this land,
This world, and its blue roof, the orb'd heaven,

With yonder sun-set glories, our stunn'd hearts
Take confidence, as in the gracious God,
Who hath establish'd Earth, and given command
That she should sit on her foundation firm,
At rest in all her beauty.

HATHAN. There, O Father !
There is our trust, our propping-up against
These rumours of near ruin and alarms :
Nor heaven, nor earth, nor water, shew a sign
Of breach, wreck, or disorder ; All is still ;
Save man's loud passions, which, let forth too large,
Come back, like unchain'd lions, on himself,
And prey upon his vitals :—God's great world
Hangs on its nothing safe ; 'tis man's small world,
Convuls'd into disorder by himself,
That doth present confusion.

LOT. Yet the words
Of Abram's tongue are not to be mispriz'd,
For Abram's heart is perfect with his God.

HATHAN. Be wroth not, son of Haran, if I
speak—

Hath not this exile from Chaldean Ur,
The son of Terah, to whom Canaan's land,
Between the Hittite and the Maon-cliffs,
Is portion'd, passions human like our own?

Tiara'd so with glory!—Let us rise,
O son! to greet the strangers—

*(Lot and his son-in-law, leaving their place,
salute the approaching Angels.)*

LOT. *(continuing)* Hail, glorious children of
the road!

1ST. ANGEL. All hail,
And peace and joy upon you from the Lord,
Ye, children of the city!

LOT. We receive
Your salutations, joyous; yet, before
The majesty of your divine aspect,
Your servants, over-dazzled and abash'd,
Bow down, as if unworthy. *(They bow themselves
to the ground.)*

2D. ANGEL. Fear thou not,
Son of the eastern people! Be not sham'd
To commune with the stranger!—we are come
From Sinai-mount, on whose twin-tops this morn
We sat, to view the cities of the earth,
Babel, and Rehoboth, and Niniveh,
And Rezen, and Mizraim's crowded marts,
Zoar, and Memphis, and Nile-nourish'd No,
And Salem, built by Jebus on his hill,
And slime-enriched Sodom in her vale;

We saw them, and their people, passing through
Their gates and streets, on business, or on sport,
Thousands of thousands, with their thousand aims,
Hurrying, like troubled waters, to and fro ;
We listen'd with our ears, to hear their hum ;
Whether th' Almighty, and his fearful name,
And worship, were regarded in the midst
Of the great concourse, and tumultuous heave
Of their engross'd, gain-grasping, multitudes :—
We listen'd ;—and from some we heard a loud,
From others, a suppress'd and feeble cry ;—
But, from this city, on the slime-rich plain,
The cry ascended loudest ; and we come
To prove the people both with eye and ear,
If they be such as is their bruit.

Lor.

O ye

Princes of God, (for by what lower name
May I address the glory that flames forth
All round you ?)—in mine own, and household's
name,

I bid you welcome to our city-gate,
And to my house, as sojourners and guests ;
For—in this boisterous and unholy city,
Whose bruit, though evil, by its evil acts,
Surpassing rumour, is outdone,—I ween,

August and lordly though your persons be,
Yet, yet, as strangers, from aggressive hands
Ye shall require protection.

1ST ANGEL.

Babel's sons

That worship Baal, and the Ethiops
That bow them down to No's goat-headed stones,
Respect the stranger, as he passeth through
Their cities.

LOT.

Nor in Babel, nor in No,

Stand Peor's or Asheerah's fanes ; nor are
Their holidays by kings and people kept
With hideous celebration :—wherefore, now,
My lords, if so ye please, turn in, I pray,
Into your servant's house, and tarry there
All night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise
Up early, and go on your ways.

1ST ANGEL.

Nay, nay—

All night we will continue in the street.
Behold ! the sky is radiant ; and the moon
Already, o'er yon eastern hill, hangs out
Her lamp, to light us all the long night through,
As, underneath some branchy olive's shade,
Hous'd coolly, we shall slumber till the dawn.

LOT. My lords, on Sephar's mountain, and the
wastes

Of Dedan, ye may safely bed beneath
Heaven's canopy ; the lions of the wild
Will there respect you ; but, in Sodom's streets,
Prowl other ravagers ; and marble walls,
And doors, brass-barr'd, are needful to secure
Sweet slumber to your eyelids.

2D ANGEL.

Forasmuch

As thou, best knowing, dost suspect thy folk,
Haply of rude, inhospitable, deed,
Tow'rd us wayfarers, we resign ourselves
To your protection :—Lead us then along
Son of the eastern people !

Lot.

Then, my lords !

Proceed with me ;—my dwelling stands aloof,
Towards the western city-wall, embower'd
Amid green tufts of foliage ; yet we, needs,
To reach it, must pass thorough the main street,
Now thickly set with tables, and afloat
With wine and luxury.

ANGELS.

We attend thy side ;—

Now—onward let us walk.

[*They pass on, and enter the gate.*]

SCENE III.

Cell in the Temple of Peor.

KING, PRIEST (*who enters on the sudden, and as agitated with wine and passion*).

KING. So ! So !—an incident hath happ'd to mar
The glad outgoings of the afternoon :—
Spok'st thou of the Chaldean ?

PRIEST. Him, my lord—

KING. The wandering man, who, from Euphrates'
shore,
Of late arriv'd ?—to whom we have assign'd
Our city-common, as a fattening walk,
For his shrunk sheep and goats ?

PRIEST. Even of him—

KING. The man, whom we have permitted to
steal in
To this our city, with his household stuff,
And here to house him in a lonely nook,—
A slanderer, and a traitor to the folk,
And gods, that cherish him ?

PRIEST. 'Tis that fellow !
To him, and to his lying lips, we trace

These city-troubling rumours, these dark threats,
Of death, and doom impendent!—Yesterday,
Ev'n at the gate, the man was overheard
In damning converse; and, this day, he stood
Aloof, in scorn from these our jollities;
Nor mingled with your people; but, colleague'd
With aliens, haters of our gods, pass'd up
Through the long street that held the worshippers,
Scorning to touch our garments—he, and his
Conspiring strangers, in their foreign robes,
Tossing their haughty heads in contumely,
And uttering scandalous words, condemnatory
Of these our celebrations:—I am come
Straight from the place, where I, with rage, beheld,
The doings of these scoffers.

KING. Search them out—
Dishouse—extirpate them—send forth thy bands
Of chambering priests and temple-underlings,
And, ere the midnight pass, assail and storm
Their mansion, as it merits:—Now, of this
No more;—let us betake ourselves again
To solace, which this jarring circumstance
Too long hath interrupted.—To the tables!

SCENE IV.

*An eminence near Mamre, on the east of the Dead
Sea.*

ELIEZER, SHEPHERDS, SHEPHERDESSES.

ELIEZER. A little onward, gentle friends !

1ST SHEPHERD. The spot
Attain'd is pleasant, and commands survey
Of th' eastern plain stretch'd under.

ELIEZER. But a few
Steps farther to the sycamore—

2D SHEPH. That stands
Fronting the moon, and, in her leaves and flowers,
Seems drinking in the moonshine ?

ELIEZER. There, O friends—
There halt, and, underneath the wild-fig's shade,
Let us, to sound of timbrel and of harp,
After our day-work done, delight our hearts,
In the sweet evening's cool, with even-song,
And dance, and pastime, fitting to the sons
And daughters of our master's house :—Begin,

Ye daughters, that, with tabret each adorn'd,
Go in the dances forth, of them that join
The merry-make ;—arrange the artful ring,
And foot the mazy round, that ye were wont
Upon th' Assyrian meadows, to the chime
Of Jubal's new-invented harp.

(The Shepherdesses range themselves into two Choirs, and dance to the sound of their timbrels.)

ELIEZER. Now change
The guise, and, with your roundelay of praise,
Alternating in mutual choirs, exalt
Our hearts to thoughtful joy.

(The Shepherdesses sing.)

FIRST CHOIR OF SHEPHERDESSES.

1.

Awake, my timbrel ! make thy sound
Spread wide through Abram's tents around ;
Awake, my heart ! be tun'd, my voice !
Spread wide through Abram's tents thy joys ;
Such joys as spring from God above ;
His adoration, and his love.

SECOND CHOIR.

2.

Once under Charran's pine-tree shades,
I danc'd with Aram's black-ey'd maids ;
And sung, to Jubal's trembling strings,
Such songs as Chaldee shepherd sings ;
But now, I, with my tuneful band,
Sing a new song, in Canaan's land.

FIRST CHOIR.

3.

The Chaldee shepherd, when on high
He sees the sun traverse the sky,
Or moon, along the bridge of night,
Walk in her silver sandals bright—
Their beauty doth his heart betray ;
'Tis secretly entic'd away.

SECOND CHOIR.

4.

But I behold, upon their frame,
His spirit, that hath garnish'd them ;
See in them, ravishing display'd,
The hand of Abram's God, that made ;

For sun, and moon, and stars, though bright,
Are but the shadow of his light.

FIRST CHOIR.

5.

His chariot he doth make the clouds,
Wherein he bindeth up the floods ;
The lightnings, that precede his path,
He makes his ministers of wrath ;
The winds, that vibrate tree and tower,
He makes the angels of his power.

SECOND CHOIR.

6.

He chideth, and, at his rebuke,
The pillars of the earth are shook ;
He smileth, and the skies, all-bright,
From pole to pole are sown with light ;
The God of Abram is my fear ;
Who would not love him and revere ?

ELIEZER. The peace of heav'n dwell richly in
your heart,
Sweet maids, in recompense of this your song !

And now, ye shepherd-swains, fulfil your part,
And follow, with a sequel suitable
Of dance, and song, the damsels' roundelay.

*(The Shepherds, after performing a rustic
dance, sing in divisions alternately.)*

FIRST CHOIR OF SHEPHERDS.

1.

Where Chabor's waters, soft and slow,
Near Shinar's mount, begin to flow,
The son of Terah, as he fed
His flocks upon the river-mead,
Heard, from a golden cloud, on high,
A voice resounding through the sky.

SECOND CHOIR.

2.

Arise, the God of glory spoke,
Nor longer feed near Shinar's rock ;
Forsake thy father's house, and go
Unto a land that I will show ;
There I will bless thee, and thy name
Make great, and glorify with fame.

FIRST CHOIR.

3.

The son of Terah, at command
Of God, went out from Charran's land ;
He went with all his shepherd-store ;
He clomb Euphrates' sedgy shore ;
He pass'd with all his long array,
Through Tadmor's waste and weary way.

SECOND CHOIR.

4.

The son of Haran, by his side,
Attendant, did on camel ride ;
Their journeyings, their joys, and cares,
Were common ; one same God was theirs ;
That God, who gave them the command,—
He brought them to this promis'd land.

FIRST CHOIR.

5.

Their flocks, and herds, and tents spread round,
And cover'd half of Canaan's ground ;
One narrow land could scarce contain
Th' expanded substance of the twain ;

They part ; and Terah's son his tent
Hath pitch'd on Carmel's green ascent.

SECOND CHOIR.

6.

His kinsman, from Mount Carmel's top,
Look'd east to Bela's sunny slope ;
He saw the Plain ; her brooks, her bow'rs,
Her greensward flats, that ask no show'rs !
He chose them for his portion fair ;—
He sojourns, and embowers him there.

ELIEZER. 'Tis well, O friends !—Now, for our
eventide feast,
Of shepherd-viands, fruit and bread, and wine,
Beneath the sycamore ;—The turf will serve
For our soft seat ; the heav'n-hung moon for lamp ;
The thick tree-shade for canopy :—Our talk
Will be of God's kind leadings ;—of the son
Of Terah, here within his mountain-home
Surrounded by the friendly Canaanite ;
And Haran's son, that bides by Sodom's wall,
Near neighbour to th' ungodly Amorite.
Sit—sit we down in the cool shade.—

ACT III. SCENE I.

Apartment in Lot's house.

ANGELS, LOT. (*To them the Wife and Daughters
of Lot.*)

[The evening-meal, called a feast in Genesis xix. 3, may be supposed to be ended, at which the wife and daughters of Lot, according to ancient Hebrew custom, officiated as waiting-women. These have now retired, and leave the others at table, enjoying moderate wine and conversation.]

LOT. Illustrious strangers! now that cheerful
 food,
So needful to recruit the body's waste,
Hath stay'd our hearts, and to the mind allow'd,
(That lower function now discharg'd) free time
And scope for social converse, bear with me,
When I congratulate my lowly roof,
My family, myself, on this most blest
Enjoyment of the company of those,
Whose looks bewray not Earth, who, in the skirts
Ev'n of their garments, carry a divine
Fragrance that whispereth Heaven.

1ST ANGEL.

Not to us,

Sons of the same sole Parent, and, no less
Than man, subordinate to Heav'n, extend
Bland words, most like to worship ;—we are here,
Thy fellow-servants, and walk to and fro
O'er earth, on errands from the mighty One,
The master of his starry-chamber'd house,
The universe.

LOT. I see and recognise
Your dignity of office, as the bright
Ambassadors of God, that here below,
Seen or unseen, range vigilant, and have
Charge of one chamber of th' Almighty's palace,
This earth, our dwelling-house,—to aid the good,
T' upbuild the cities of the righteous,
To wipe the widow's and the orphan's tears,
To lift up him that is oppress'd, and fill
The hearts of wronged innocents with joy ;
But, as chastisers also, arm'd with power
To scourge the wicked, and shake down to dust
The tow'rs of the ungodly.—Ye have seen
Our Sodom ?

1ST ANGEL. We have walk'd through Babylon,
The mighty Hunter's city, bulwark'd strong
With brass and brick ; her walls we have gone round,
And counted all her tow'rs and palaces ;—

Through Ashur's city we have journey'd too,
From morn to eve, and seen her valiant men
In scarlet, and her chariots in her streets
Jostling, and all her gallants raging round :—
These we have pass'd, and noted down their crimes,
Corruptions, and impure idolatries,
In our great book, the Register of sins ;
But this, your smaller people, in their gross
And multiply'd pollutions, doth o'erpass
Babel's and Huzzab's swarms.

Lot. Sodom's fields
Are rich, as is the garden of the Lord,
And over-feed her slothful citizens
To luxury and lewdness.

2D ANGEL. Egypt's land
Is rich, and Ashur's land, and Nimrod's land,
Are rich—what pity that the gifts of God,
Indulg'd to mortals, as the means whereby
To virtue they may mount, and happiness,
And thus enjoy th' Almighty in his love
And grace, should be by man himself debas'd
To be the instruments of vice, and sin,
And misery? Behold the great All-wise
Hath planted pleasure in the frame of man,
And made it the foundation of his own

Partic'lar preservation, and the life,
From sire to son, transmitted endless down :
Thus, in his boundless wisdom ; and, as man
Doth husband well or ill these appetites,
So is his weal or woe ; too oft his woe,
From his unwise conducting. Nor hath God,
According to these tastes of man, refus'd
Means, fair and blameless, them to gratify.
For, to preserve his mortal life, how hath
He stock'd this earth with riches ? how with flocks,
Hath cloth'd the pastures ? how hath cover'd o'er
With corn the valleys ? how the mountain's sides
Hath clad with climbing vines ? Land, sea, and sky,
Swarm with vast wealth, cattle, and fish, and fowl,
That court the human taste t' exhaust their rich
O'er-swelling treasures ; and, in moderate use,
All these are bless'd. Thus, thus hath God, as with
A silver cord, secur'd man's life, and link'd
His being to his pleasures. Nor is less
Secur'd that other general life, that runs
Down the long line of being, and preserves
Continuous man for ages :—For the taste,
Conducive to this mighty end, in which
The population and the power of worlds
Are all involv'd, hath he not minister'd

Beauty, the sov'reign and resistless charm,
And gather'd every grace and ornament,
Scatter'd apart through his gay universe,
And, as in one bright type, concentrated
Them all in woman's form? What beauty glows
In sun, moon, stars above, what shines below
In sea, earth, mountain, fountain, hill or dale,
Hath he not stamp'd it on the face of her
Whom he has form'd his help-meet, making thus
Man's noblest admiration and his love
Of beautiful, the golden hoop that binds
Connubial fellowship, and household-bliss,
With perpetuity of race? Most pure
These joys; most chaste, and sacred; not reducing
Th' aspiring and ethereal spirit back
To sensual grovellings, but exalting it,
And training it, as if by steps, to mount
The scale of godly love, whose base is set
On earth, whose top ascends out near the rills
Of life, beside the throne of God;—by this
The good man climbs, until he set his foot
Upon th' empyreal pavement, there t' admire,
With us Heaven's hosts, his fellow-worshippers,
Godhead itself the source of Love and Beauty.

LOT. O that this wisdom priz'd and practis'd were!

2D ANGEL. These, then, are here below man's
truest goods,

And graces the most godlike, love of God,
Of wisdom, and of beauty ; and, with these,
The handmaid of all virtue, temperance,
T' adjust enjoyment to the proper pitch,
That wisdom warrants. These do comprehend
His fulness of felicity on earth :

Yet, yet, alas ! how seldom have we seen,
In our angelic progresses throughout
The cities of this world, that man perceives
His happiness, or practises aright
Its methods, taught by Wisdom ; rather, led
By Folly, he misuses and perverts,
Towards his own unhappiness and death,
What God hath lent, in his beneficence,
To benefit and bless him ;—witness this
Your city, Sodom ! (*Here are heard shouts from
without, as of bacchanalian revellers.*)

1ST ANGEL. Ha ! the shouts of men,
Outraging night, and her sweet light the moon,
With their obtrusive clamour !

2D ANGEL. In the street
Some mischief is a-gathering.

Lot. Their bold shouts,

Methinks, are heard too near—

*(He rises to look forth from the casement ;—
his wife and daughters rush into the apart-
ment with symptoms of terror and alarm.)*

MELAH.

O, my lords !

The house all round us is attack'd !

LOT.

The men

Of Peor ?

MELAH, Peor's men are round about us,
With torches, and with firebrands in their hands,
Directed tow'rds our casements ;—and they cry,
*Destruction, Death to the false foreigner,
That hath come in to judge us !*

ANGELS *(to Lot)*.

Suffer us

To chide away these clamourers.

LOT.

Not so—

Mine honour'd guests ! The master of the house
Shall, as becomes, out-face them.

*(He goes from the apartment into the exte-
rior passage leading towards the door—
the tumult increases, and there are heard
from without the voices of)*

RIOTERS.

Fire ! Fire !

Out with the sojourner !

MELAH AND DAUGHTERS. Save us, my lords!

Oh, save us!

1ST ANGEL. Fear ye nought, O gentle dames!

God will preserve the righteous.

*(Again are heard the tumultuous voices
of the)*

RIOTERS. Out with the men!

Drag, drag them out! Fire! Fire!—Burn down the
gate—

Tear up the roof! Down with the sojourner!

Out with him and his men!

*(Lot overpowered by his alarm, comes back
into the apartment.)*

LOT. They force the door,—

They overleap the threshold—O my daughters!

1ST ANGEL. Hold, hold—

Nor let Disquiet seize you—'Tis now time—

High time for God's omnipotence to work!

Be thou at ease, O dame, with these thy daughters;

Fear not, for we are with you;—thou, our host,

Stand back, secure; and leave thou unto us

Protection of thy family, the good

Against this combination of the bad;—

One short, short word—one look of levell'd wrath,

Will scatter and confound this foul night-crew

Intent on wickedness!

(The angels go into the passage leading towards the door, leaving Lot and daughters, agitated with terror in the apartment.)

1ST ANGEL. *(heard from the passage.)* Retire,
ye wicked!

Be blasted with confusion from our God!

2D ANGEL. Hence, ungodly!

Hence!—Be with blindness smitten by our God!

SCENE II.

Palace of the King of Sodom.

KING, PRIEST OF PEOR.

KING. Again, alarm? Nor can the still midnight,
That now draws close her curtain round the world,
Screen us from heart-vexations?

PRIEST. All the city
My lord, O king, is raging!

KING. Let it rage;—
Rage is its element when Peor lords;
What strange in this?

PRIEST. Peor hath lost his power ;
And his acknowledg'd servants, that went hence,
Reeling on riotous adventure forth,
Now wander like to blind men in the streets,
A-groping for the wall, abandon'd, foil'd,
Cowering with vile dejection and despair,
All-impotent.

KING. Hath riot and large wine
So overlay'd them, that the god himself
Of riot hath forsworn them, and struck dead
Their bodies and their souls with impotence ?—
—The morning will re-man them !

PRIEST. O my lord !
Nor wine, nor he, our worshipp'd god, have struck
This stroke upon our city ; but, in spite
And in defiance of him and his power,
Some adverse demon hath inflicted it.
Our band of men,—that from the Idol-house
Went arm'd with torches, brands, and emblems, high
Toss'd up in pride towards th' out-dazzled moon,
To punish in his house the sojourner,
That did blaspheme our idols, with his pair
Of golden-girdled, long-rob'd, aliens proud,
His guests—no sooner came up to the gate,
Demanding retribution, challenging

Forth from their cells these mockers of our gods,
When, from th' up-flying door came fearless forth
That gold-girt pair, and on the threshold stood,
With faces splendid as the sun, their feet
As pillars of clear fire ;—they stood, and cry'd,
As when a lion roareth, *Hence, ungodly !*
Hence!—Be with blindness smitten by our God !
As in a moment lightning from on high
Blasts forest-trees from top to root, so came
That charm, that curse, upon our armed men ;
And down their arms and emblems fell ; their eyes
In darkness roll'd about ; up to the sky
Their stounded heads they rais'd, and try'd to find
The bright moon in her place, but found her not :
Like men in bottom of black pit profound
They walk'd, each against each with jostling shock,
Jarring in their confusion, nor could reach
The house or door whence came the blinding blast
That wither'd them ; but round the walls they went
At fault, in dizzy circles endlessly,
Or through the streets, in darkling mazes, they
Roam'd errabund, of their own homes in search,
Or shrieking, in their sightlessness, for guides,
Homeward to guide their stumbling steps.—This tale
Of fearful news mine ears have just obtain'd

From our own temple-warder, who, himself
Eye-witness, bears upon his blinded eyes
Unwilling witness of its truth, and now
Lies in his crypt a-shivering.

KING. Is it thus,
The Chaldee shepherd, with his brace of guests,
Hath routed thy Baal-peor, with his host
Of emblem-bearers?

PRIEST. 'Tis from this defeat
That Peor's people, though near midnight hour,
Tumultuates in madness, young and old,
Crying for vengeance ; and, with the fierce wrath,
Passions, and outcries stirr'd by this defeat,
Other alarms are mix'd, sown by the friends
Of these intruders, how that Death and Doom
Hang o'er this city, and her dreadful day,
Decreed by Fate, approaches.

KING. Priest of Peor !
Let your own god and goddess look to this,
If vain night-rumours fray them :—Gather now
Your temple-men, and altar-men, and all
Your pomps of priestlings and hierophants,
And cry aloud, *O Baal ! save our city ;*
Try every mean to deprecate and win him ;
Gash every limb with lancets and with knives,

Ev'n till your blood on your own altars gush,
Then cry again, *O Baal ! save our city ;*
Forsooth, should he be sleeping, when his folk
In terror sleep not, he must be awak'd
To save them :—Go—nor trouble me henceforth
With such fantastic terrors.—Rather heed
Thy priest's-affairs, and con thy matin-song,
To usher in, with preparation due,
To-morrow's festival.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

Chamber in Lot's house.

ANGELS, LOT.

1ST ANGEL. These rioters are routed hence ; thy
doors

Again are safe, and need no guard :—O son
Of Haran ! Now prepare thy soul to hear
Our embassy's chief purpose.

LOT.

Let my lords
Reveal their mind ; they, who have sav'd my house

Thus by their word of power, mirac'lously,
Will speak to my salvation.

1ST ANGEL. Hast thou here
In this doom'd city any friends besides ?

LOT. My sons-in-law, the children of the land,
Who, since I sojourned with the foreigner,
Marry'd my daughters.

1ST ANGEL. Bring them straightway out—
These sons-in-law—these daughters, and whate'er
Thou hast within the city—bring them forth,
Out of this place, because the Lord hath sent
Us to destroy it, since this city's cry
Before th' Almighty's face is waxen great ;—
Therefore arise, go forth, and speak to these
Thy sons-in-law, and bid them quit a place'
O'er which th' appointed rod of wrath now hangs
Most imminent.

LOT. Thou bidst, my lord ! and I
Thy servant hasten to obey—to seek,
And save my friends.—

[*Exit.*

SCENE II.

House of Hathan.

LOT, HATHAN, AHARAH.

LOT. Daughter, and son-in-law, arise !

AHARAH. O father !

What means this haste ? thine anxious look ? this step
So quick, abrupt, and sudden ?

LOT. Up, my children !

Gather your household, and go hence !—the time
Now urgeth, and the mandate from on high
Commands you to depart, and leave this place
To perish, with its people !

HATHAN. Ha ! what mandate,
From heav'n or earth, touching a point so main,
Approves itself authentic ? Is thy heart
Yet quaking with the herdman's tale, sent down
From Mamre ?—Or have Sinai's visitants,
Thine evening guests, O father ! with their talk
So witch'd thee into terror, that anon
Thou snatchest up thy staff, and wouldst escape
A danger bred of visions and feast-fumes,

And hearsays slight as the unthinking breath
That utter'd them ?

LOT. Meet not, O son-in-law !
My warning voice with mockings !*—I am come,
Not to discourse, or argue, or receive
Repulse, but warranted by Heav'n to bid
Thee and my daughter now arise, and flee
This place.

AHARAH. O father ! this thy summons comes,
(Haply, though bas'd on truth,) yet at an hour
Unmeet for fleet departure :—Can we leave
Our home, our gather'd household-wealth, expos'd
A prey, disown'd, to spoilers ?—Should thy fears
Be falsify'd by th' issue, as we deem,
What railing, then, what mock'ry from our friends
Shall vex us, yielding to them ?—Should they prove
True, as thyself believest, can we leave
Our friends unwarn'd, unpity'd, unsaluted,
To meet that doom, from which, convinc'd ourselves,
Like cowards we shall sneak, without attempt
Or wish to rescue, by convincing them
Of what concerns their beings ?

LOT. These, thy friends,

* So Genesis xix. 14. “ But Lot seemed as one that mocked
unto his sons-in-law.”

Contemn all warning, and go revelling on
At midnight, as by daylight, without pause
In their life-long career of wickedness,
Deriding Heav'n and Providence, forlorn
Of prudence as of virtue :—As I past
Through their mad city hither, (unobserv'd,
Else violently treated), every street
Sent up its cry ; and what display of power
Had been by heav'n flash'd on them for their sins'
Correction, to their senses' injury,
Now madden them to desp'rate violence,
And impotence of fury ;—They do rage
Beyond reproof's or warning's utmost power,
Ungovernable, irrepressible,
Save by another blasting stroke from heaven ;
And that impends—th' uplifted whip of wrath
Is brandish'd for the blow—therefore, arise—
Flee, flee, my daughter !

HATHAN. Ere thy daughter flee,
O father ! thou must, father-like, induce
Thy son to follow in the flight :—That flight
Requires deliberation, and must needs
Be sanction'd by some nobler author, less
To be disputed, or be warr'd against :—
What warrants this thy panic ?—Lo ! our men,

The citizens of Sodom, dread not ought ;
But, fearless in their life's stability,
Send up, as from an amphitheatre
Of mirth, their midnight shoutings to the moon,
As if to make her jocund disk ring back
Their joy !—Doth Heav'n shew symptom, overhead,
Of ruinously falling ? doth the Earth
Tremble upon her pillars ? doth our Sea,
Fed by the Jordan, leap into the land,
As discontented with her shores ?—Sea sleeps—
Heav'n stands—land rests—nought shows disquietude,
Save thine own troubled fancy.

Lor.

O, my son !

O thou my daughter ! if thou trust not me,
Trust him, the Mighty, who hath said the word
Of terrible import :—Be these my fears,
My soul's anxieties, and deep alarms,
(Too visible in my so-troubled looks,
My haste, and hurry'd step), be these the proofs
Of my paternal care ;—be these the test
Of my sincerity and love :—If these
Convince not, by what stronger influence,
May ye be mov'd ? (*Peal of thunder heard.*) Hark !
Hark ! the very voice

Of Heav'n bespeaketh Judgment—Oh ! arise,
Flee, flee, my children !

HATHAN (*looking from the casement.*) Why—
all heav'n is clear,
And shews no clouds ;—'tis but the casual noise
Of some false, falling, star, some meteor-stuff
Exploding o'er the desert ;—we are proof
To such sky-crackles.

LOT. If this chiding voice,
If these my earnest cries, are all in vain,—
Oh, how may I adjure you more ?—By Him
Who call'd us from Chaldea—

HATHAN. Abram's God
Should speak, as then, distinctly from his cloud,
Plain to be understood.

LOT. Thou mockest me,
My son-in-law !—Alas, it is against
Thyself, thine own dear life, thou mockest me—
—O daughter, thou dost know thy father's love,—
Come with me, O my daughter !

(*He grasps his daughter's hand to lead
her off.*)

HATHAN (*ungrasping the father's hand from that
of his daughter.*) From the husband
Th' espoused wife may not well part—

AHARAH.

My father!

Urge me not so—when thus my husband wills
To dare the danger, let me—

LOT.

O my God!

Have pity, Lord, upon these abject ones
Unto themselves so pitiless—My children,
The time of grace is spent—I go in sorrow—
Farewell! May God in his red hour of wrath,
Deal mercy to your souls!—

[He rusheth out.]

HATHAN.

'Tis an advice administer'd,

No doubt, in kindness, by a mind, most full
Of love, but over-fraught with fantasies,
Conceiv'd of dreams, and talk angelical;—
No—we must not give way—that were indeed
To shew us brainstruck also—no, we will
Abide, unscar'd, at home, and here defy—
Here, on our hearths—this gloomy prophecy,
That hath unfix'd his reason.

SCENE III.

House of Achzan, Lot's second son-in-law.

LOT, ACHZAN (*His wife the second daughter of Lot*
—muta.)

LOT. Up, up, my son and daughter!—leave your
house,

And flee!

ACHZAN. Why—father, what so exigent
Hath happ'd, that, at this midnight hour, so rash
Thou rousest us with terrors?

LOT. Flee, my children!
Nor tarry thus to question, and receive
The reasons for thus rousing:—'Tis no time
Ev'n for relation of the dreadful woe
That overhangs this place—the time, consum'd
In telling it, would frustrate what should be
The very end and purpose of the tale,
The saving of your lives—your lives! Flee, flee!
Abandon house for life!

ACHZAN. For life?—so sharp!
And so abrupt! (*To himself.*) The message savours,
sure,

Lor. Vex not your souls
 With vain enquiries—doubt not—linger not—
 —Oh ! by a father's cares, a father's love,
 A father's hopes, I do beseech thee—thus—

Escape the wrath just coming—Flee, flee, flee!
Moments are pregnant—flee!

[*He rushes out.*]

Already were a-toppling o'er our heads !
—'Tis strange—why 'tis a very madness sure—

Albeit there doth shine an earnestness
Of purport, in both word and look, that proves
Somewhat well-founded—cause, obscure but true—
Mix'd up with his alarm :—Haply, he has
Too fev'rishly caught up the city-bruit
Of some disaster nearing.—Ne'ertheless,
We will not, for a fearful face and word,

Flee hearth, home, friends, and country. Here we
bide
Unterrify'd—nor flee.

SCENE IV.

The House of Lot.

LOT, STEWARD OR CHIEF SHEPHERD, SHEPHERDS.

CHIEF SHEPHERD. My lord, at this untimely
hour, ere yet
Our shepherd watchman, on his tall field-tower
Hath with his cornet's sound proclaim'd the night's
Third watch commenc'd, we have, at thy command,
Left on the fields our flocks ; and now await,
Here on thy house's threshold, what may be
The bidding of our master.

LOT. Ye arrive,
O friends, not yet untimely, nor too late,
To learn and 'scape the danger heav'n-foretold,
That threats th' unholy valley.

CHIEF SHEP. Does my lord
Dread danger from the children of the land,

Now, for th' arch-feast of their Pentapolis,
Beneath the dimness of the shame-fac'd night,
Assembling all in Sodom ?

LOT.

Their arch-feast

I know, design'd to-day, with all its swarm
Of revellers from the sister-cities five ;—
—Pass'd ye that night-swarm, unannoy'd ?

CHIEF SHEP.

As from

Our cots and sheepwalks tow'rd the city-gates,
We came beneath a stainless sky, whose light
O'er-mantled this rich valley, every road
That led to every several gate, rang loud
With tramp of rushing people, women, men,
And boys, on camels some, and some a-foot,
Amid the lustre of the chaste moonshine,
Bound for the celebration ; all the folk
Of loose Gomorrha, shouting round the cart
Whereon their Chemosh they dragg'd on with ropes ;
And Admah's and Zeboim's bevvies bold
Of females, carrying in their tabernacle
Their Succoth-benoth, emblem of the rites
They mean to practise :—Mingled with that rout,
Unchaste, and muttering infamous intents,
We enter'd Sodom's gates, and found her streets
With songs and citherns ringing, pipe and drum,

A symphony sonorous, welcoming
The morn which brings that last and lewdest feast
Which crowns their Three-days' luxury :—through
these,

And through a thousand threats and outrages,
And imprecations impious, and lewd deeds
More foul than foulest night——

LOT. Wine, lust, and night,
Gender enormous wickedness——

CHIEF SHEP. Through these,
Howbeit, we did pass, unharm'd, untouch'd,
(Some unseen angel sure did cover us)
To thy house hither.

LOT. May the same good guide
Around you cast his shield, as hence, again,
Through the town-tumult, ye return to seek
Your pasture-walks and sheepcots;—thence with-
draw

In haste my herds and flocks ; ere break of morn,
Let them be seen ascending up the slopes
Of Bela, and the southern roads that lead
To the Mount Seir ; drive them straightway on :
Nor look behind, nor let your eyes hath ruth
On garment, tent, or tent-stuff, left behind :—
'Tis God that hastens you ;—Away, fulfil

His mandate—save your lives—nor lose the time
Vouchsaf'd for your salvation.

CHIEF SHEP. As my lord
Commands, we do ;—The hand of the Most High,
Possessor of the Heav'n and Earth, that late
Preserv'd thee, when the eastern kings o'erswept
The Siddim-vale with ravening and death,
Once more save thee and thine !

LOT. Flee hence—we meet
Again by mid-day on the mountains. Flee !

ACT V. SCENE I.

Southern Gate of Sodom.

ANGELS, LOT, MELAH, DAUGHTERS.

1ST ANGEL. Here breathe ye, O my friends !
Now are we out of reach of Peor's crew—
In safety have we pass'd the throngs and threats
Of Sodom's loud night-wandering wassailers,
Inflam'd with vengeance, wine, and wrath against
The virtue that rebukes them.

Lot. Here, my lords !
Here, let me bow to you in gratitude,
Confessing you the guardians, that have led
(As parents their weak children by the hand)
Your servants safe, through darkness and dismay,
Out of the den of danger :—Merciful
To us hath been our God !

1ST ANGEL. As yet the dawn
Sleeps underneath the lip of heav'n ;—But see,
The Pleiades are up, and dancing come
Before the chariot of nigh-peering day ;—
The light is weak, yet will suffice ;—Go on—
God shall enlighten you and give you strength,
As up into the southern mount ye flee
From these the fire-doom'd gates of Lust and Sin ;—
Escape then, son of Haran, for thy life ;
Look not behind thee, neither do thou stay
In all the Plain ; up to the mountains steep
'Scape, lest thou be consum'd !

Lot. O my lord ! not so,
I pray—Behold, thy servant now hath found
Grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnify'd
Thy mercy, which thou hast unto me show'd,
In saving this my life :—I cannot 'scape
Up to the mountain, lest some evil thing

MELAH.

Oh! 'twill be

But a brief pause; the time, how strict soe'er
Appointed, may afford brief resting space.

LOT.

The time

Is rigid, and allows no respite—Life
Is stak'd, and hangs in dire uncertainty,
On a few well-us'd moments.

MELAH.

Hear, my lord!

And entertain, a moment, in your heart,
My supplication:—'Tis our parting-haste
And the confusion of the night have made
My soul forgetful—In my chamber lies
The Babylonian garment, twin'd with gold,
Which, on the day thou wedd'st me, in the house
Of my dear father in Chaldean Ur,
I wore, and thence have priz'd as my most dear
And valued ornament—It lies—forgot—
In my soul's hurry overlook'd—I heav'd
The vesture from its wardrobe out, yet left
My gold-wov'n gawd behind;—Oh let my lord
Permit me—but a momentary space—
Brief respite will suffice—back on my steps
To hasten, and redeem my father's gift,
The pride of Babel's looms.

LOT.

Forward—on—

It is no time to dally idly thus
With danger.

MELAH. Spare, my lord—o'erstrain not thus
Th' angelical appointments;—on the way
Precede thou with my daughters—I, apace,
My purpose done, will follow in thy train,
Within the time prescrib'd.

*(She leaves the party, and re-enters the City
gate.)*

LOT. Against this breach,
Imperious woman! my foreboding heart
Rebels; yet th' urgent time forbids my tongue
To loose itself to murmurs:—Let us go,
My daughters!—we have linger'd here too long.

SCENE II.

Front of Abraham's Tent on the heights near Mamre.

ABRAHAM, ELIEZER, SHEPHERDS, &c.

ABRAHAM. *(as proceeding from his tent.)* Who
calls me from my tent? What hath befallen,
That voices thus so loud, betokening

ELIEZER. My lord,
The heavens do terrify us—the just-risen
And glorious sun, behold, is swallow'd up—
Look, look at yonder cloud!

2D SHEPHERD. Who may at its terror look,
And tremble not!

ELIEZER. From beyond
The hills of Midian and the Red Sea's arm
It comes, and in its frightful bosom bears
Condens'd, Arabia's whole combustions, all
The torrid fumes and steams upgather'd from
Dedan, and Mesha, and that Hall of Death

In safeguard of the Lord of heaven and earth,
The God that wields the thunder !

ABRAHAM. In, my friends !
Seek your tents' shelter from the coming storm.

SCENE III.

Great hall of the Pantheon-temple in Sodom.

THE KINGS OF SODOM, OF GOMORRHA, AND OF THE
OTHER TOWNS OF THE PENTAPOLIS, SEATED, WITH
THEIR NOBLES, AT THE TABLE OF THEIR MORNING
SACRIFICIAL-BANQUET, WITH WINE, ODOURS &c.

KING OF SODOM. Your cups, my lords ! in honour
 of the gods

Conjoin'd, whose worship, and whose sacrifice,
Here we are met to celebrate ;—Fill high !
To Chemosh, old Gomorrha's god, and Her
That tabernacles in the silver shrine
At Admah and Zeboiim !

OTHER KINGS AND NOBLES. Crown it high !
To Chemosh, and his sister silver-shrin'd,
The Lady-god of Admah and Zeboiim !

Let the joy circulate from mouth to mouth,
Till our flush'd hearts rebound!

(The cloud of darkness comes over.)

KING OF SODOM. Ha! what is this?—
—It darkens—sure, the sun begins to flag
And founder in his race!

KING OF GOMORRHA. Hath some huge bird,
Ascending from the Indian ocean, come
And o'er your city spread his murky wings,
That thus the air is thicken'd?

KING OF SODOM. Brother-king!
Our Peor and Astarte held the sky,
During their days of honour, fair and clear;
But this your Chemosh is a powerless god;
His golden lungs possess no breath of pith
To blow aside these sky-polluting clouds,
That so confound us. *(Lightnings with thunder.)*

KING OF ADMAH. Ha! these shotten fires
Have an unusual brightness; How they glance
Adown the pillars, casing them all round
As with red sheets of gilding!

KING OF ZEBOIIM. Hark! the heavens
Tumultuate round—one universal roll,
Unbroken by a pause!

KING OF SODOM. Tush—tush—'tis but

Some whirlwind from the south, sent up to greet us
From Am'lek's wandering children !

KING OF ADMAH. Flash on flash,
They fly, and lap the cupola and walls
With their long, lambent tongues !

KING OF ZEBOTHIM. By heav'n, the house
Is kindling !

1ST MESSENGER (*Suddenly entering.*) Fly, my
 lords ! The city-gates
And city-walls are all on fire !—They flame
Like burning torches, and one fiery belt
Walls in the city.

2D MESSENGER (*Entering.*) Up, up, my lords !
 Escape—
The temples of the city from the clouds
Are smit with conflagration ! Every fane
Is at its summit lightning-struck—the trees
That gird Baal-peor's temple, like dry reeds,
Crackle and burn from top to root—the roofs
And pinnacles, beneath the which ye sit,
Are flaming to the heavens !

3D MESSENGER (*Entering.*) Terror, terror !
Destruction stares us all around !—the walls,
Roofs, floors, of every house within the city,

Engender flame, as if inborn—the streets
Sprout fire beneath the feet of passengers !

KING OF ADMAH. By all the gods ! it groweth
here, beneath

My very feet !

KING OF SODOM. O heav'n ! see, see all round—
Above—below—a canopy of burning !
A hedge of flaming-red destruction
Impassable !

KING OF GOMORRHA. O mercy, mercy, heaven !

KING OF ADMAH. 'Tis death !

KING OF SODOM. 'Tis death—it draweth nigh—
'tis here—

Kings, nobles, people all, one funeral-pile,
One general holocaust of all the city !
City and city's gods—

KING OF ZEBOIIM. I burn ! I burn !—

KING OF SODOM. Flames wrap me all about—
fir'd—fir'd—envelop'd

As with a brimstone-garment—
No mercy—no salvation—no escape—
Death !—dreadful !—Death !

SCENE IV.

Before the gate of Zoar (or Bela), situate on the slope south-east from Sodom, and commanding a view of the Jordan plain.

LOT, HIS (*unmarried*) DAUGHTERS. (*To them the SHEPHERDS OF LOT.*)

LOT. Here stand, my daughters!—here, through
heav'nly grace,
And heav'nly aids, we are arriv'd—escap'd
The rain of fiery ruin now shot down
Upon the sinful city ;—yet, alas !
One is a-wanting ;—Look ye down the road
Which we have pass'd—see ye, afar, or near,
Through the thick gloominess that broods around,
Your mother coming ?

1ST DAUGHTER. I look far—and near—
And round—with anxious, searching eye I look ;
But, O my father ! I nowhere behold,
Through the thick gloominess that broods around,
My mother coming.

LOT. I too strain mine eye,
In weary search for her I left behind,
But see her not a-coming.

2D DAUGHTER.

O my mother !

Why do thy feet thus tarry ? On thy way
Hast thou not sped ? that thus our eyes in vain
Seek thee on thy return ; thou gav'st to us
Thy promise to delay not—Oh, too slow,
That promise to make good !

LOT.

Alas ! my heart

Forebodes some misadventure :—she is not
Upon the road—nor on the slope—mine eye
Wanders defeated in its wish to find
Her whom we miss, the straggler of our house ;
Nought in the nearer space, o'er which our feet
Have travell'd, in th' o'er-hanging tempest's dusk
I see—save—one dim half-discover'd form—
(Methinks—our faithful shepherd, hither bound !—)
Nought in the farther distance, saving fire,
And surges of black-smoke and cloud ;—in heaven
Fire towards earth descending—on the earth
Fire towards heav'n ascending ;—all the place
Where Sodom should have stood, the Jordan-plain,
Where beauty dwelt, and verdure, one broad blaze,
As of a forest, or a wilderness
On fire :—Oh ! yonder, yonder, God is now
Working his work, his dreadful work !—
But see—our trusty servant—

CHIEF SHEPHERD. (*Approaching.*) Peace be
with you

And thine, my lord and master ! mid such war
From heav'n against the wicked !

LOT. And with you
Be peace, O faithful servant !—Thou art come
Last from the plain of Jordan—Hast thou seen,
Footing the path, or resting in the field,
The mother of my daughters ?

CHIEF SHEP. I have seen
The mother of thy daughters !

LOT. Thy reply,
So brief, and utter'd with that faltering lip,
Conveys alarm, not comfort.

CHIEF SHEP. I beheld,
As I pass'd by—She, she of whom thine eyes
Are now in quest, for whom thy daughters dear,
Heart-sick with weary expectation,
Now languish—

LOT. Speak it, though unwilling, out—
Break not thy tale with tremblings—

CHIEF SHEP. O my lord,
And master ! wherefore should thy servant's eyes
Have seen—have seen the melancholy sight
Which now my duteous lips must tell ?—A tale

Of sorrow for my master's house !—No more
The wife thou lovest shall return—thine eyes,
O'erstrain'd with longing search, shall ne'er again
Be greeted with her presence !

1ST DAUGHTER.

Woe the while !

My mother !—

Alas ! why didst thou separate from us ?
Our's was the fault, that suffer'd thee to go
Back on thy steps—calamitously back
Upon the danger we forsook !

LOT.

O thus

To perish !—'twas a levity of wish,
Thy husband, for thine own most dear behoof,
Should have more sternly check'd and overrul'd ;—
—To look behind ! to covet ! to go back
To thine abandon'd vanities !—thus, thus
By thine own fond, deceitful, heart, betray'd
Into destruction direly manifest !
Slight the pretext for parting, but, O sad
And heavy, as I boded, its result !
Yet, sad as be these tidings, let us know
What thou hast seen—th' event, in all its points,
Befall'n of mourn'd disaster.

CHIEF SHEP.

As my lord

Commanded us, his servants, ere the dawn,

I with my brother-shepherds had retir'd
Out of the city to the fields and pens,
Thence to withdraw our various flocks and herds
Up to th' appointed mountain, there to be
Safe from the ravage that should soon befall :
My brother-shepherds, ere the dawning broke,
Had gather'd and unpenn'd their several flocks,
Which up the steep they now were driving :—I
Remain'd the last, t' upmuster and lead off
Those to my charge entrusted, which were now
Past'ring upon the western plain, between
The Sodom-wall, and Maon's mountain-mound,
That shuts the valley westward :—All my flocks
I had collected, and was driving them
Along, beside the Ellassar gate, when heaven
Began to thunder, and the fire of God
Descended from the clouds ;—upon the gate,
Turrets, and ramparts of the city-wall,
Directly down it fell ; the slime-strong gate,
And rampin'd wall, kiss'd by the heavenly flash,
Flew up to flame ; one moment serv'd t' engird
The city Sodom with one ring of fire.
Nor these alone ; her temples, towers, and trees,
Houses, and domes, within her walls' precincts,
Inflam'd at once by the same lightning-glimpse,

Like firebrands stood a-blazing :—I did hear,
As I pass'd by, the sound of dying men,
Women, and children, irredeemably
Shut up as in a furnace, shrieking loud
In th' agony short, short, but terrible,
The dreadful minute that did separate
Sweet Life from pang-rack'd Death ;—their dying
 shriek,

The howl of hopeless anguish, that bespoke
One whole, whole city, fire-engulph'd at once,
Yet ringeth hideous in my ears !

LOT.

Alas !

Woe for the wicked city ! God hath made
Her pile great for the fire !

CHIEF SHEPHERD.

Amid these sounds

And sights, too terrible and racking-sore
To be endur'd by mortal eye or ear,
Safe and unscath'd I travell'd on, (the God
Whose voice is Thunder, and the heav'n's fleet fires,
His ministers, protected me) :—I cross'd,
Fast by the gate, the slime-enriched dale
Where Birsha fell ;—her naphtha-gurgling wells,
Enkindled by the raging elements,
Like oil in burning lamps blaz'd high ; I pass'd
The streamlet-water'd gardens, where the men

Of Peor wont to sacrifice ; the groves
Of fig and olive-trees that lie beyond,
Now singed and thunder-scath'd in all their tops ;
And I was come into the Vale of Salt,
The southmost limit of the Jordan-plain,
When, underneath the cliff, by the way-side,
That stands, hew'd by the chisel into shape
Of pillar'd beauty, I beheld, alas !
Thy consort, leaning (as methought), fatigu'd,
And resting from her journey ;—I drew near—
I spake—there came no answer back—she stood
Speechless and lifeless on the spot—the fire
Of God had stricken her !

2D DAUGHTER.

Alas, my mother !

LOT. O heavy stroke from God !

CHIEF SHEP.

There, there, she stood—

Thine eyes' desire, before me, woeful, stood ;
Dead, in the attitude of life—her substance,
Incorp'rate, by the subtile force of fire,
Into the matter of the rocky salt,
Whereon she lean'd !

LOT.

A monument, alas !

Of heavenly judgment, chastisement from God,
On such as, in defiance of command,
Snar'd by this world's cupidities, return

These things are an instruction and reproof ;
And yon lewd cities, in their shame o'erthrown,
Are to the world for an example set,
Suffering this vengeance of deserved fire.

ODE (*By the daughters of Lot.*)

1.

Awake my harp ! Though sad the day,
Wake to thy melancholy lay !
The voice of God hath spoken loud ;
His fire came wafted in its cloud ;
The glorious right-hand of his power
Shone terribly, in Death's red shower.

2.

I saw on earth, ev'n face to face,
His angels, ministers of grace ;
I saw in heaven, that angel-pair,
His ministers of wrath and war ;
I saw them, walking gloriously,
On the black cloud that fill'd the sky.

3.

I saw, through the gloom-cumber'd air,
Their golden girdles glistening clear ;

As, from Heav'n's charged battle-bow,
They shot their dazzling shafts below ;
The shafts came down, divinely aim'd,
And Sodom, and her sisters, flam'd.

4.

Oh day of vengeance ! Day of wrath !
Of Desolation and of Death !
Brimstone and Burning blast the Plain ;
Death hath devour'd the wicked men ;—
I too partake my dole of woe ;
Tears for my Mother largely flow !

SCENE V.

Heights near Mount Carmel, (as before.)

ABRAHAM, ELIEZER, CHIEF-SHEPHERD OF LOT,
SHEPHERDS AND SHEPHERDESSES OF ABRAHAM.

ABRAHAM. My kinsman safe ?

CHIEF-SHEP. OF LOT. Thy servant, sent in haste,
From Bela, ere the first night-watch was spent,
To carry thee the tidings, left him safe,

With his two virgin-daughters, near the gate
Of Bela, cover'd by the twin bay-trees
That interlace their branches, and make there
A tent-like shade. Nor yet thy kinsman's house,
Amid the general havoc of the Plain,
Hath felt not of the fury, nor remains
Unwidow'd, and unstruck ; his spouse, decoy'd
Back by her worldly love, his sons-in-law,
Men of the land, that had in Sodom spous'd
His daughters, scoffing at the heavenly voice,
That warn'd them off, have met the punishment
Due to their disobedience ; yet their loss,
Hath made upon thy kinsman's house a breach,
Meet for lament and mourning.

ABRAHAM.

Heaven was kind

To testify the danger ; they themselves,
In stopping up, like the deaf asp, their ears
To the sweet voice of Heaven, 'gainst their own
souls

Were cruel, and have fallen into the doom,
Of which they made their mock'ry.—But, O friends !
Behold the face of Heaven, how chang'd ! the cloud,
That carry'd, yester-morn, within its womb
The fire of devastation, now purg'd off,
Has left the sky to yonder dripping clouds,

As their possession ;—See, o'er Debir's grove,
Token of love, God's rainbow, in its arms
Taking the green earth up, and whispering down
Calmness and peace, after such wild alarm
And tumult loudly rolling.—Tow'rd the east,
Look down, on what was once the Jordan-plain,
Well-water'd as the garden of the Lord,
A vale of verdure, a luxurious lap,
Whereon both Spring and Autumn, emulous
Each of enriching most, flung flowers and fruits,
Profuse beyond profusion's wonted rate ;
Behold it now, deflower'd, deform'd, defac'd,
A vale of ashes and of desolation,
Her olive-groves to dust consum'd, her vines,
Black as an hearth with burning ; all her towns,
Whose tile-enamell'd roofs but yesterday
Sparkled upon her bosom, from their place
Extinguish'd quite ; their temples, turrets, domes,
Become an heap, all black, save where the flames,
Yet smould'ring 'neath the ruins, from the rifts
Burst out, like water-bubbles on the gurge
Of some rock-ruffled stream :—Yet doth their smoke
Ascend like smoke of furnace—see it rise,
Curling in folds voluminous, from where
Gomorrha stood, and Sodom—how it floats

Towards both mountain-banks!—the long, low, lake
From end to end, as far as vision kens,
Is fill'd and chok'd with vapour, rolling up
Tow'rds the Sea's northern bay.

ELIEZER.

A mournful view !

Man's pride of glory stain'd ! Alas ! the city
So costly, so unholy ! In one hour
Is she made desolate !

ABRAHAM.

God hath aveng'd

Himself on her unrighteousness ; to her
A goodly land he gave, fulness of bread,
And heart-rejoicing wine ; but she, ingrate,
Wax'd proud and haughty ; lustful Idleness
Was in her and her daughters ; she did work
Abomination in the sight of heaven ;
And sacrific'd, to beastly gods obscene,
Oblations of uncleanness ; therefore God
Hath taken her away, as he saw good ;
Nor doth her place now know her !—In this stroke,
O friends ! let us acknowledge God ; admire
His power ; revere his justice ; and rejoice,
For all the goodness he hath done to us,
And to my brother's house.—Here, in the sight
Of God, and looking down, with pious awe,

Upon his field of vengeance, smoking yet,
Express, ye Sons and Daughters of my house !
Express it, in your songs !

(SHEPHERDS *and* SHEPHERDESSES *form themselves*
into two choirs, and alternately sing.)

SHEPHERDS.

1.

But yesterday I saw, with fear,
The wrath-charged cloud of God draw near ;
It came ; it settled o'er the plain ;
And downward fell the fiery rain ;
Man's pride of beauty, and his power
Fell underneath the killing shower.

SHEPHERDESSES.

2.

O terrors of the Lord ! how shook
The world, in day of his rebuke !
His chariots like a whirlwind came ;
His arrows flew, fledg'd fierce with flame ;
With fury he discharg'd his ire,
And his rebuke with flames of fire.

SHEPHERDS.

3.

O earth, that saw'st his lightnings smite,
Be thou astonished at his might !
Ye that afar are dwellers, hear,
And tremble at the tale of fear !
Ye that are near, approach, and see
How terrible his doings be !

SHEPHERDESSES.

4.

Th' Almighty, in his hand, doth hold
A cup of trembling, mix'd of old ;
It is of mixture full, the Lord
Therein his wine of wrath hath pour'd ;
The wicked drink ; the dregs they wring
Thereof, that bitter anguish bring.

SHEPHERDS.

5.

Th' Almighty in his hand doth hold
A cup of Blessing, mix'd of old ;
The cup is large, and deep, and round ;
Salvation, Mercy, there are found ;

He to the good extends the cup ;
They drink the wine of Blessing up.

SHEPHERDESSES.

6.

O happy they, who, just and pure,
Live in the love of Heaven secure !
Who fear not—save that God-sprung dread
That fortifies, not makes afraid ;
Goodness and mercy, day by day,
Pursue them on their heavenly way.

BOTH CHOIRS.

7.

For me—O never shall my heart
From trust in Abram's portion part ;
He is my hope, my staff, my stay,
My joy in trouble's evil day ;
Exult my heart ! Sing loud, my voice !
GOD REIGNETH, LET THE GOOD REJOICE.

END OF THE DESTRUCTION OF SODOM.

ENVY—A FABLE.



1.

As on a summer noontide, round
My garden glad I walk'd,
And with the pretty plants and flowers,
God's blooming children, talk'd ;

2.

I spy'd in one rich-scented bed,
Together sweetly set,
A lily tall, a towering rose,
A lowly violet :

3.

Each spread its glories out, as if
It wish'd to shine alone ;
Yet all the uninvidious three
In sweet agreement shone.

4.

I said unto the towering Rose,—
Sweet Rose! why seekest thou not,
Where thou may'st gather all thy praise,
Some unpartaken spot?

5.

The Rose reply'd—I envy not
What praise each sister shares;
Albeit in mine own fame I joy,
I glory too in their's.

6.

I said unto the Lily tall,—
O! gentle lily, how
Amid such gay competitors,
So sweetly bloom canst thou?

7.

The Lily said—I envy not
Each blooming sister's praise;
The eye that looks on them with joy,
Glads me too with its gaze.

8.

I said unto the Violet,—
Sweet leaf! how canst thou shine
In thy humility, mid flowers
O'erflaunting thee so fine?

9.

The meek and richly-spangled flower
With gentle voice reply'd,—
To hear my taller sisters' praise,
It is my joy and pride.

10.

Again at eve, my walk I took,
Where gay the garden glows,
And, as the sun sunk in the west,
In th' east the moon uprose ;

11.

The sun, o'ercurtain'd round with gold,
Was bedding on the tide ;
The moon, forth from her tiring-room,
Came peering in her pride.

12.

I said unto the Sun,—fair light !

Why speed'st thou thus away ?

Is it because thou canst not bear

Thy sister's rising ray ?

13.

The Sun reply'd,—I go because

Heaven's scale must now decline,

I do resign the sky with joy ;

'Tis sister's turn to shine.

14.

Again, as Morning's star wax'd dim,

My garden walk I took ;

The moon was sinking in the west,

The dawning sunbeam broke.

15.

I said unto the Moon,—fair light !

Why speed'st thou from the sky ?

Dislikes it thee thus to behold

Thy brother mounting high ?

16.

The Moon reply'd,—I go because
With me must go the Night ;
'Tis not because I loathe to see
My brother's rising light.

17.

That day I pass'd unto the hall
Where dames assemble gay ;
Fair flowers ! how shone they in the dance !
How gallant their array !

18.

Their pretty bosoms heav'd, as down
The dance they tript, and smil'd ;
But Envy, 'neath the silky gauze
Lay, like an adder coil'd !

19.

I pass'd into the halls where met
Sage folks, of letter'd name ;
But Envy gnaw'd into their souls,—
Each grudg'd his neighbour's fame.

20.

Thus all God's creatures guiltless live
Of Envy's carking cares ;
'Tis man alone that in his breast
Th' unblessed canker bears.

21.

For me (be thank'd, my gracious God !)
Some seraph, kind and good,
Surely hath rooted from my heart,
A weed so rank and rude ;

22.

Whence, I make others bliss mine own,
With musings sweet and mild ;
And walk among the sons of men,
Rejoicing as a child !

FINIS.

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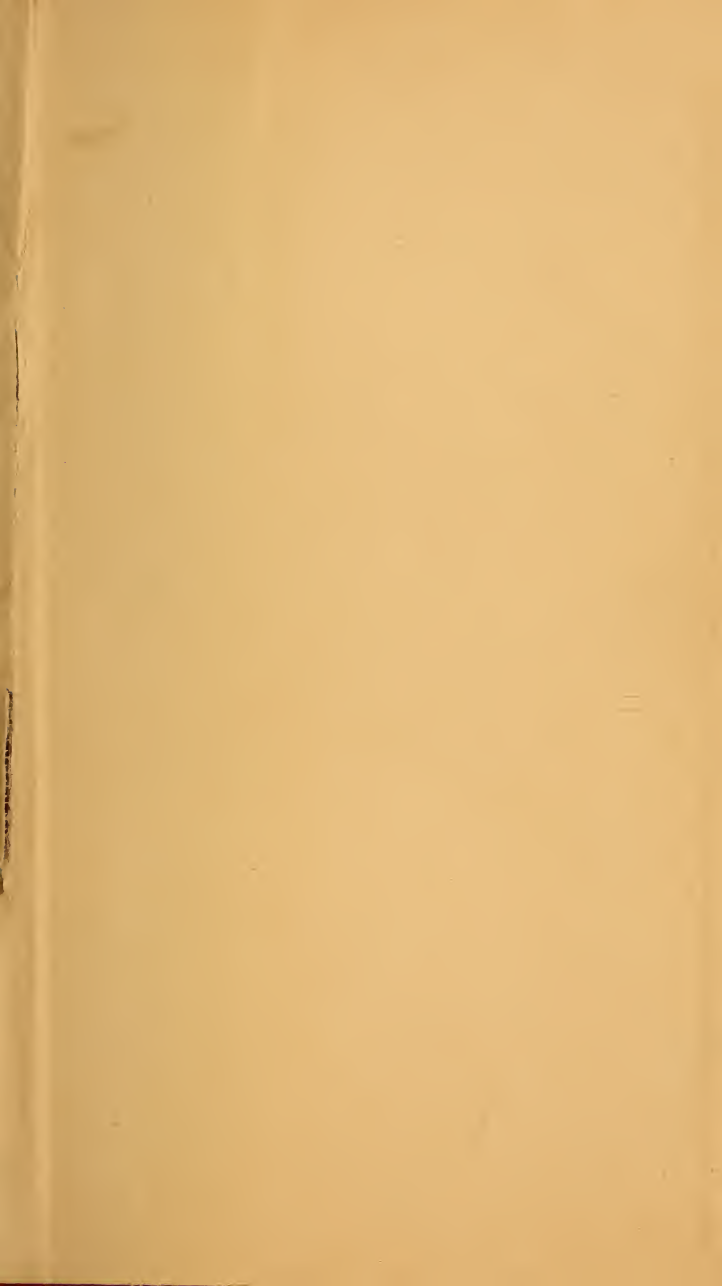
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